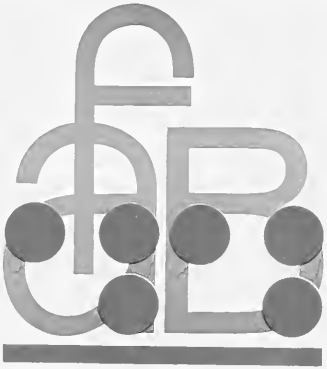
Speaking Out

Personal and Professional Views on Library Service for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals



Speaking Out

Personal and Professional Views on Library Service for Blind and Physically Handicapped Individuals

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National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

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Preface

This book is the result of an independent project first proposed to the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress in 1981 by Ms. Leslie Eldridge, former subregional librarian in San Francisco, California. It was accepted by NLS for the purpose of providing an open, frank, and unfettered forum—perhaps for the first time—in which librarians, students, educators, and users of library services for blind and physically handicapped individuals could freely express their thoughts and feelings, whether positive or negative, concerning attitudes, education, and experiences they have encountered.

The views expressed are solely those of the individuals and not necessarily those of the Library of Congress. Neither do we accept responsibility for the accuracy of statements made by interviewees. Like the reader, we approach this volume with interest, concern, and in pursuit of knowledge—that we may better serve our constituency and assist our present and future professional colleagues.

Frank Kurt Cylke, Director
National Library Service for
the Blind and Physically Handicapped
The Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

Introduction

A symposium was held in San Francisco in July of 1981 on the subject of educating librarians for serving the blind and physically handicapped. It was sponsored and co-chaired by Dr. Elizabeth W. Stone, President, American Library Association, and Mr. Frank Kurt Cylke, Director, National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, The Library of Congress. This symposium was the impetus for the following collection of interviews, in that I believed that several important issues were not fully brought to the attention of that group. I also believed that that group, being fairly representative of the leaders in the library world, did not fully comprehend the problems involved in providing library services to the handicapped and were not angry enough at the larger societal problems that directly relate to a library's ability to give the handicapped their due. I doubted at that time whether anyone in the library field, whether teachers, administrators, public librarians, handicapped librarians, or librarians working now in programs serving the blind and physically handicapped, had the management skills, the library knowledge, the risk-taking capacity, or the innovative ability needed to bring programs for the blind and handicapped out of their step-child status. So, I undertook this investigation of current practitioners, patrons, and students.

Another inspiration for drawing together the following interviews came from the simple belief that people who cannot read print are being ill served by public libraries, despite the appearance in recent years of articles and books on the subject. Grants have been generously given to libraries to begin services for the print-handicapped, and many hours at professional meetings have been devoted to the question of "How can we meet these people's needs?" Yet the fact remains that blind and handicapped people are not viewed as a part of the service community in most public libraries throughout the country. In preparation for an American Library Association convention, a librarian was rounding up speakers for a presentation concerning libraries and

the handicapped. When a blind speaker was suggested to her she replied, "Oh, we already know about talking books."

This tendency to assume that the case is closed on the topic of talking books and that the blind and print-handicapped are being adequately served by existing services is widespread and is used to free many public librarians and library administrators of any feelings of responsibility in this area. That tendency is aptly stated by one interviewee, the librarian in charge of a large library for the blind and handicapped: "I think that the fact that library service for the blind and physically handicapped is called a special service, provided with special funding for a special community, with special materials is becoming the greatest barrier to people who are blind and physically handicapped having the full range of library services that they should have."

It is my intention in presenting these interviews to give the reader a chance to expand this rather limited view of library services for people who cannot read standard print. Librarians who are working at the front lines as part of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress herein describe their services, their feelings about these services and the patrons involved, and their hopes for expanded services in the future. Administrators of these libraries also offer some ideas about the role that their counterparts in public libraries could be playing in regard to services to the print handicapped. Both these groups also explore the possibilities of special training in this field.

Going further, I thought to include interviews with some handicapped library users; as I tried to explore their views on the library it became obvious after a few interviews that it is not what these people said, but what they did *not* say that should be noticed by the astute reader and taken to heart. The following statement by a library school student held quite true: "I would love to approach people more formally and do a formal study that doesn't even mention libraries, because often when you ask people what they want a library to do they'll mention what books they'd like the library to provide. You can't really expect people to know what the library's potential is and yet you can get them to talk about their needs and what they are interested in."

I strongly believe that subregional libraries for the blind and handicapped (local units of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped) should be more numerous and should be there "to get the people interested in what's going on, to get everybody perking, to get a little life out there," as one of the librarians says. They should not be duplicating the warehouse aspect of the large

libraries for the handicapped, but should be in the handicapped person's community providing services parallel to those of the public library. Where this is not possible, the public library should be stepping in to serve the print-handicapped people in its service area, with whatever resources it has. Some fine examples of this local service are provided here, as well as much evidence of the desire on the part of some librarians to improve service at this level. They are handcuffed by a lack of funding and staff directly related to the "low man on the totem pole" status of services to the blind and physically handicapped. This low status, I believe, is the result of tradition and an unenlightened administration on the local level which carry over into public library resistance to including the blind and handicapped in their targeted clientele. Ways of overcoming this resistance and educating present and future librarians and administrators are discussed here and put in context by the inclusion of interviews with students currently in library school.

As one blind reader says, "The more handicapped people are employed in different walks of life and the more involved in community activities they become, the more they will take it for granted that they use their public library, the same way they use the restaurant down the street." I believe it takes a special breed of librarian not only to help prepare for this eventuality, but to help make this local library use by the handicapped a reality. Such a librarian must be someone who can take what is not written down, what is not commonly accepted practice, and forge a service for this taxpaying segment of the population, despite the obstacles which reveal themselves in these pages. Such a person would not only benefit this particular group of patrons but would benefit the library profession as a whole. My own thoughts on beginning this project were that few of this type of person, not a destructive radical but a constructive radical, are entering library school and so few are entering the library field.

These are hard financial times for all libraries, and times when most librarians are not eagerly looking for new patron groups to serve, but as one well-known library educator says, "The shortage of funds is forcing attention to the question, 'What are we really here for?' This could be a positive thing; there could be positive results. The next step is, will libraries place service to the blind and physically handicapped among their priorities?"

The interview format was chosen because of its readability and because of its serendipitous nature. All the interviews can be seen as chance encounters for the reader, offering surprises even though he has gone so far as to pick up this book. These are the unplanned meetings

with ordinary and extraordinary people that have changed all of our directions to a certain extent in the past. The planned encounters of workshops, conferences, and classes have their value, but seem to attract those who are already motivated. I hope that the thoughts of the people interviewed will add a new dimension to the thinking of those who are already committed to the idea of services to the handicapped and spark some interest in those people who have never given such services a thought. A recurring theme in the librarian interviews is that people do not pay much attention to library services for the handicapped until the issue hits them personally. These interviews are meant to provide this personal encounter.

Participants were not chosen scientifically, nor were they chosen at random. I attempted to interview librarians representing a mix of the outspoken and the not so outspoken, the northern and the southern, and so on. I am aware of several librarians who would have made equally excellent contributions, but who were not included because of time and space limitations. Handicapped library users were picked on the basis of their frequent use of the subregional library here in San Francisco, their particular life situations (either reinforcing or breaking the handicapped stereotype), and their willingness to allow me and my tape recorder into their homes. All the patrons interviewed are visually impaired and thus represent the farthest extreme of the print-handicapped population. The idea of including one person with cerebral palsy, one with multiple sclerosis, one with dyslexia, one with brain damage, and one with the physical inability to hold a book seemed contrived to me. Suffice it to say that those people and countless others with different limitations as to reading print (an allergy to ink, for instance) are represented here by their visually handicapped counterparts. Library school students were recruited from two local schools, the University of California at Berkeley and San Jose State University, as well as from my alma mater, the University of Wisconsin at Madison. A picture of their concerns and motivations is presented along with some thoughts about how well this group would receive special classes on serving the handicapped.

All interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and edited to their present form. The temptation to formalize and "academize" their statements was valiantly resisted by the more literarily minded librarians, in the spirit of informality which I requested. Standard questions were asked each group of participants, but in the interest of clarity and conciseness I have shortened some of the more repetitious answers.

I wish to thank all those who so graciously consented to participate in this project by giving me several hours of their valuable time for the

interviews. I also extend my gratitude to Frank Kurt Cylke, Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped of the Library of Congress who warmly received my idea for this book and encouraged me along the way. And, finally, I wish to express thanks to Krandall Kraus, Assistant Head of Publication and Media Section at NLS, for his invaluable help in guiding, coordinating, and assisting me with the production of the manuscript. Throughout the text the terms "user" and "patron" are used interchangeably to refer to blind and physically handicapped individuals who participate in the Library of Congress talking book program.

Leslie Eldridge
San Francisco, California

Part One
The Users of Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

All the users interviewed are patrons of the San Francisco subregional library, living in a metropolitan area and receiving personalized library service. Their library experiences differ from the experiences of handicapped people in more rural areas, but the concern shown by these people about information and quality of life echoes the concerns of their counterparts in other areas of the country.

Some of the users were directly involved in an unsuccessful effort to improve their library service, and this is mentioned. Some of them took part in programs at the library and because of this are beginning to understand the full range of library services that should be available to them. For that reason this group was chosen as potentially more thought-provoking and more knowledgeable about libraries than other handicapped people whose library experience has been limited to receiving books through the mail.

The users were first asked to talk briefly about their lives and how much reading and education have meant to them. In the cases where users have been blind since birth or early childhood their particular difficulties in learning and obtaining information were explored. Those whose vision loss came later in life were asked to talk about that loss. Both groups then discussed their current use of talking books and made suggestions as to improvements in their talking-book library service.

Hilda Peck
Founder
Golden Gate Braille Transcribers

I always feel that when Bill and I go out, we should dress well. If we get any attention from the sighted people, at least they can say, "We saw two blind people today who were very well dressed." They are not going to say, "We saw two blind people today. Isn't it too bad that there's nobody to take care of them, to tell them that they're a little messy looking?" Bill and I know that there are many blind people who are not well put together.

When I was a child I read braille and if I were waiting to go to Sunday school and had gloves on, I would read the books even with my gloves on. I could feel the braille through my gloves. Sometimes, when I was out of braille books, I would pick up a print book, find out what the name of it was, and then make up the story myself. I turned over the page when I thought it should be turned over and I would sit for hours doing that until I could get some braille books.

Charles Isbell

In our world there is too much information. Look on this table here where you see four radios, do you not? What do I use four radios for? One is a shortwave receiver which keeps me in contact with international events. Another is a good FM receiver, and there are a tape recorder and a scanner so that I can turn on all the police reports and fire reports for this area. These radios keep me in touch. Of the people out in the avenues, there might be a few who would want to do that. Most of them watch maybe three hours of television news a day if they are so inclined, and they assume that that's enough. They do not think about libraries, because they can go to bookstores and because they are confronted by stacks of paperbacks at the supermarket. They cannot go anywhere without having the opportunity to buy books.

Blind people, of course, do not have those opportunities and do not even know that they could have. Blind people are used to being restricted. Blind people cannot see sunsets. Blind people, no matter how good they are at cane travel, still do not cross streets well. And they do not expect to. It does not upset them that they can't. And most blind people know that they are never going to have a good library. They have a sense of something deeper than resignation. The idea just never even occurred to them; it has never come into their consciousness, and I have no idea how you would bring it into their consciousness. And yet, if we could build the library that some of us were dreaming of building last year, those people who were up to it, if they were not overwhelmed, would eventually love it and cling to it.

I was born in West Texas and I grew up there in a time before subsidized education. That is, most blind children went to blind schools then, as I did for a couple of years. Then, because of a peculiar family situation I was able to get into public school. I was the first blind child in West Texas—maybe in the entire state—to go to public school in the 1950s. But of course that did not work out because no one had any skills or knowledge about how to deal with me. Some

teachers took it as a challenge to work with me and I learned a few things. We accomplished something, but most of my class time was wasted. The education was not very good and I read on my own what I could. We had talking books and a library of sorts with Shakespeare, the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, and Sherlock Holmes in braille.

I went to college unsubsidized by the state because of a television show on which I won enough money to go to school. When I was a senior in high school the people in my town decided that I must have a dog. All blind people have dogs, they thought. So they contacted several places and flew me to New York, where I was trained in order to get the dog. While I was there I applied for New York television shows, which you naturally might do as a child. I was accepted for the "Strike It Rich Christmas Show" in in 1952. "Strike It Rich" was a program on which they introduced tragic people, such as a woman whose eight kids had just died in a fire and whose husband is paralyzed. You couldn't lose, and I came out with $12,000, which was enough for me to buy textbooks, pay readers, and enroll in Texas Technology in my home town. People assumed that that was where I would go to college, although every summer I went somewhere else to school, such as the University of Texas, the University of California at Los Angeles, and Tulane.

As a youngster I had been a minister and preached every Sunday, also doing young people's revivals. And, of course, as a blind man, with a braille Bible and dog, I won souls left and right. So I started college as a preministerial student with a major in history, which lasted about a year. I dropped out of the ministry and became a psychology major. The day after I got my master's degree, I was still at Texas Tech doing some work, and the head of the psychology department stopped me in the hall and said, "Why don't you come by? I want to give you your work schedule for next year." I told him in no uncertain terms that I was not interested in his department or in a teaching position. I did not want to stay at Texas Tech forever.

During the years between college and my move to San Francisco, I worked in sheltered shops and Goodwill stores, and I begged, too. How many of the blind people who are working today in sheltered shops or filling jobs as concession stand people do you think are perfectly happy? They are happy because they feel valuable. People have told them that they are not valuable unless they work, but that kind of work is no different from selling pencils on the street. It is make-work.

As a joke, a friend sent my name to San Francisco State University for some foreign language program in the graduate school, and I was

accepted. So I moved to San Francisco. Then I went to Cuba, right after the Bay of Pigs, to see what it was like. It was totally accidental that I went. I just ran into some people who were going. Then I returned to San Francisco and I have mostly stayed here ever since.

Seeing people assume that blind people are to be served as quickly as possible, to be dealt with as easily as possible, and gotten rid of. And the blind person assumes these things, too, because that is how he has been treated all his life. You can't suddenly change all that. If any change is ever going to take place, it has got to be the whole community, including the blind people, that changes, and that's unlikely. The National Federation of the Blind has been in operation for years and they honestly do believe that they can educate the world that blindness is an inconvenience and not a handicap. But it is not true. There is not a blind person in the world who can get on a bus without causing havoc. I do not care how well adjusted he is or how many degrees he has; just put him on a bus with some strangers, and people are going to drop packages and offer him a seat. Somebody will say, "Hey, you're in the way there, buddy." There is nothing the blind person can do about this. It's inevitable. Obviously this problem is much more serious than a library problem, because the blind person confronts it all the time. To him a library is not a place to go to look for information. He has no concept, for example, of going to the library and finding out all about Joan of Arc. Most blind people do not go to libraries at all. They get books through the mail, which is what I did for years.

Most blind people are senior citizens, have raised children, and worked at a job when they were younger. They have never seen a card catalogue. They did not go to the library when they could see and they are not going to go now. And if they do go, what will they want to read? That is the problem for the Library of Congress. This year, for example, they have suddenly decided to give Charlie Isbell all the books he has ever wanted. I do not know what possessed them. Some strange force took over and now we have books on history that are really history books, science books that are really science books, psychology books that are really psychology books. Who is going to read them? Me and four or five hundred other blind people around the country. Who is going to read B. F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity?* The same people who read Agatha Christie's mysteries?

I've been to visit many of the talking-book libraries throughout the country, and they were all pretty much the same. Stacks and stacks and stacks of books are stored somewhere. A lady who apparently has never had sex is sitting behind the desk and she says, "What would you

like?" And you tell her what you would like. She says, "Just a moment," and goes away and comes back. Then you ask her, "What new books do you have?" And she says, "You have to give me the author or title you want." There is no browsing, no access to books. This library in San Francisco is the first one I've seen where you can walk in, look around, and say, "I'll take that one and that one and that one" off the shelf.

Society sees blind people as ugly, people they would rather not deal with. If a blind person really wants to know how he is received, he should realize how he feels himself in certain situations. Suppose a blind person is on a bus and riding along feeling comfortable. Nobody is threatening him. Then, all of a sudden, the person sitting next to him has an epileptic seizure. The blind person gets that cringing feeling that he feels sorry for the poor fellow, but wishes he would not have a seizure there. He does not like the ugliness of the thing. That is exactly how the sighted world feels about the blind person. The bus driver is driving along and he is having a tough time anyway. Then he has to deal with a blind person. Does the blind person know where he is? Can he get off the bus? Does he know where he is getting off? Other people on the bus are going home from work, or going to work, or going out for fun, and here is a person who is limited, who brings a little bit of the ugly reality into the world, and people do not really want to deal with that. Nothing can change that feeling; you cannot lecture people about that.

I have developed a great interest in sports so that I can have something to communicate to people. I can walk into any bar and in five minutes get into a conversation about hockey, basketball, football, or baseball; I am also knowledgeable about horse racing. A person who is really interested in those things cannot help talking about them, and soon he forgets that I cannot see. But the blind person has got to work at it; he has to take each individual and convert him.

I may sound bitter to you, but I'm not really. I am caustic, maybe.

Most blind people define themselves in organizations, but honestly, when you sit down in an ACB or an NFB meeting, unless somebody tells you where you are, you would not know. The groups are all the same. There are always too many middle-aged women trying to decide whether someone else in the group is appropriate to ask out. And there are always too many quiet people sitting in the corner who do not do anything. And the same people, year after year, are elected to offices or positions. They are always having meetings about how to get other people involved. Nothing ever happens really, except that they sit around and figure out how to sell candy.

I used to go to meetings and hold up my hand and suggest, "We want to be treated like seeing people on the one hand, and we want to sell candy on the other. People are not buying candy from us because they want some candy; they are buying candy from us because they feel sorry for us. Therefore it is inconsistent for us to sell candy." If you want to get these people fired up to fight for a library, you're asking for the impossible, and so is Jim McGinnis. [See p. 22.] I can walk into any blind organization and mention Jim McGinnis's name and get hit by fourteen bricks. I feel honored because I have met him several times, and I like his dedication. He is the Thomas Paine of our kind, and usually he is right. The thing is, these library users do not even know that they are being mistreated, or that they are missing out on something.

I do not know who among the general public uses libraries. I have a dear friend who goes to the public library. He walks over to the current bestseller area and picks up the latest James Michener or the latest Taylor Caldwell and then he leaves. He has not used the library at all. Now I use the public library reference service all the time. I call up and say, "I'd like the names of all the translators of Marcel Proust into English, please." Or I'll say, "I want the exact birthplace of Malcolm Lowrey, who wrote *Under the Volcano.*" I will ask whatever I need to know at the time. Sometimes I need to have words looked up in the dictionary. But I have never gone to the public library in person. I do not want to overwhelm them.

The Library of Congress is going to have to hire blind people as librarians as much as possible, but not call them librarians. We do not need a graduate of the Michigan State Library School; we need someone who understands what blind people want and who has the ability to organize books in the library. That is what a librarian does; he does not use any of the library science that he learned in library school because he is dealing with a different situation. I do not think he needs to know books, I am sorry to say. I love it when a librarian does, but most blind people read Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey. I am not sure you should use the word "librarian." "Book provider" would be better. Of the hundreds of thousands of possible books available to me, I might want to know what new books have just come out, and if you know me well enough, you know not to tell me about the new Louis L'Amour. It does not take too much perception to figure that out. Don't you think the knowledge would just sort of come to you as you worked in the library? I think it would. Most blind people are glad to get what they get. The librarian is a book provider to them.

Ideally I would like the talking-book library to be a library like any

other. I think I know what a library is for and how to use one. I know it is not ever going to be like any other library, but that is what I would like. I would like to walk in and look at a card catalogue and check subject material or author material. I would like to have a knowledgeable person sitting at the desk who would know what is available. I would like to have a place where all the braille magazines or the flexible disc magazines are available, so I would sit at a table in the library and read, as people do in regular libraries. I would like to have a good newspaper like the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* available, as most people have. That is what most people go to the library for anyway—to read the newspaper. I want all that, but it is not going to be. What I do not want is a library in such confusion that nobody knows where anything is. What I do not want is another idealist coming along and putting it all together, only to see it fall apart in a few months. It crashes such a long way down when it falls.

At home, with my talking books, I have worked out a schedule so that I can have structure in my reading. I read three hours on one subject and then two hours on another, and I write during the day at some point. I do that all the time just to keep myself from going mad. Most people do not have that problem because most people are average folks. The library is a very unimportant part of their life. Look at most people. Do most people in this country read books? They do not. What happens after you lose your sight is that a sweet little lady comes around to tell you what you are eligible for, and mentions the talking books. You have not read a book since high school and you have a vaguely bad feeling about the experience. Maybe you will enjoy the books, but most likely you will not. Most blind people will learn to listen to their televisions and some will even learn to listen to movies. They will lead their limited lives the way they led their limited lives before they lost their sight.

I value books to the point that that is all there is in my world, by choice. There are seeing people like that; there are many frightened, mad, sighted people who live in a world of books. Simon and Garfunkel sing, "I have my poetry to protect me." There are many people like that, including me, and I happen to be blind as well. The blindness makes it easier for me to get away with it because most people do not know whether I read or don't read.

I would like for all people who are limited in one way or another to be exposed as much as possible to what there is. That is our main problem—that there is almost no exposure. Sometimes a limited person can find great joy, as I do, in these books. Most crippled, mentally retarded, or blind people are not exposed to very much stimulation;

even their own special organizations do not expose them to much. They have very narrow interests. I would like to see their interests expanded.

Every blind person wants to see, every crippled person wants to walk, and every crazy person wants to be sane, if he knows what sanity is. But I know that I would not change very much if I could see. The first year I would spend my time learning how to focus and learning what image means. What is a human being like? What is a three-dimensional image of a human being? So that's what a pretty girl is really like. A pretty girl is a nonexistent concept to me. I would spend months doing that kind of thing and I would have to teach myself to read print. But I know that within a year's time the peculiar qualities of Charlie Isbell, which are there and have nothing to do with blindness, would reassert themselves and I really would not be much different. Reality changes very little for us, and I think that that is a valuable thing to know. You do not need heroes, you do not need to be inspired. If you have not committed suicide yet, it means that you have learned to deal with your reality, whatever it may be. You have accepted it. And I feel that I have done that sufficiently. There is no resurrection, but life is still not bad, because all the real joy I have ever had was given to me by another human being like me, not somebody special.

Rose Resnick, Ph.D.
Executive Director
California League for the Handicapped

The subregional library is a living library. When you have other functions for handicapped people you have to provide transportation to get them there, but they never ask for transportation to the library and they get there. I have never seen such turnouts. All of a sudden, handicapped people did not have to have anybody to pay for their transportation. Nobody called up and asked for a taxi to get there. They just showed up and they showed up in good numbers. That time we had the marathon reading, fifty or sixty people came. That is just terrific.

The reference aspect of public libraries should be explored and extended for handicapped people. For instance, I want to write an article on the impression that you can get about a person's personality from his handshake. I have been accumulating what I could from my reading on that subject, but because shaking hands has come down to us as an ancient custom I wanted to fill in my background knowledge for the article. I called the reference department and they read me one sentence from a social science book, but they said that they thought there would be many more articles in magazines and that I should go and look them up. I explained my problem to them but I did not get very far with the project.

Members of the general public do not read, they watch television. They cannot identify with the immeasurable place libraries have in the lives of some people. They cannot grasp the concept because they don't identify with it and they don't experience it themselves. And like everything else that they do not experience, average citizens can't imagine it. So when we wanted more space for a library for the blind and handicapped, the general public certainly couldn't understand the importance of that library for us.

Space for talking books does not translate in most people's minds into convenience for the handicapped. If we wanted money for cookies and parties for the handicapped, people would have understood that.

One group called up with five hundred dollars they wanted to donate to the handicapped for a Christmas party. Now I have been out raising money for staff and for equipment and for jobs for the handicapped, and that seemed like a terrible waste of money to me. So I wrote the group a letter and asked if we could use the money for something else. They did not say no, but they gave the money to another agency, for a party. They liked having that pleasure.

And people do not give money to help a person get a job either, because that makes the handicapped person independent. They like to give something that makes the handicapped person feel inferior and makes the donors continue to feel that they have done something for a "poor handicapped person." We do not accept that philosophy; we do not hand out Christmas baskets here. A grocery store once asked us if it could use our name when they went to corporations and asked for money for the baskets. My board of directors said, "No way. That's not philanthropy in our book." To teach a man to fish is better than giving him the fish. That is one of the reasons that more space for a library is hard to get money for.

Bill Gerrey

I was born in 1947, and by the time I was three or four I was fascinated by the amount of time that people spent with paper. There was a tremendous amount of paper around, including books and magazines. It was apparent to me that all the women in my family, who could see, read smooth things, smooth magazines, and my father, being blind, read rough ones. He read braille. I can remember thinking that it must be—and I didn't use this sophisticated term—a sex-linked trait. Women read smooth things and their voices were really high.

Then things got difficult. I got read to often. A sister who was five years older than I was read comic books to me, mostly to keep me quiet, because I was very noisy and rather bad-tempered.

I went to the California School for the Blind and there I started playing with the braille characters in a more intimate sense. I stole a slate from the older children's classroom and actually made an "and" and then discovered that you could turn it into the word "you" just by turning it around, because they are the same braille characters.

Then I got thrust into public school, which was what I wanted so that I could live at home. That was for second grade. I was eight years old and it was the beginning of the mainstream experiment. They just mainstreamed the beejesus out of kids and supposed that, like chimpanzees raised with children, blind children would have all the abilities and flexibilities of sighted children. But it isn't so. Braille is just enough slower that the classroom teacher put me in the slow reading group and within about two years I was in the slow learners' class. I had to read the orange books and everybody else read the blue books, so I thought I was dumb and talked myself out of reading. I could listen to my father read as fast as people talk and it seemed to me that that was very good. It turns out that braille reading can be done that way, but you have to develop language skills that help you reduce the redundancy of language to make braille more efficient than it is when you read word by word. That is something that I didn't learn until Optacon

days, in recent times. So not having been very good at reading braille books, I read talking books and that was it. I tried to get myself to read some talking books that I really liked in braille, figuring that since I had already read the books, it would be good braille practice. But, it became at that point, by the fourth or fifth grade, like doing push-ups—one of those things that you just don't do.

I stayed in public schools for the rest of my school years and the one thing that saved me was that I discovered in my father's closet some braille technical magazines which he had been getting since 1950. He did not really thrust them on me, even though I was very interested in electronics and had gone to surplus stores with him. I finally was able to assimilate some of the knowledge that I had learned through friends and to recognize that the information in these braille magazines actually interested me. So I started reading them. It was an uphill battle, because at that time I really was not a good braille reader. It took about three years to gain momentum, so by the time I was in the seventh or eighth grade, I read absolutely nothing else. The energy that I would have to put into reading other books was not worth it. For one thing, scientific language has a very small vocabulary so once you learn that and once you learn the style of science, reading it is like reading a subset of language. So if I saw the word "naive," which doesn't appear in scientific works, it would take me a while to sound it out. I was excellent at doing that, by the way. However, I read very slowly and my comprehension was not very good because I had no patience for it. But I did have patience for the technical magazines and they are basically what I read all the way through high school. For other reading I would try to reach some sensible compromise, between reading braille books that I had to read and roping someone into reading the material for me.

We had library time in grade school and I would go browse around in two bookcases, whereas the other kids had a whole library to browse in. I knew the size of my books and I knew the size of their books, and the difference between how many books I had and how many books they had was pretty obvious from the time I was ten years old. This did not really bother me, though, because I really could not read very well anyway. It became like a cultural difference to me. I knew in a way that it would be better for everyone if there were more books for blind children, but for me it would not have made much difference.
I kind of dug it when we went to a library for the blind, though, and my father was in seventh heaven. To be around books was so strange for him. We went to the regional library every five years or so, and then he would not be able to contain himself for excitement. But you

have to understand that I was talked out of being literary, partly because all the literary people could read and I was not very good at reading.

I was articulate and for some reason that I cannot explain, I was a good writer. I gave very good speeches. I think what finally bailed me out is that I discovered the information-containing capacity of print. Even now, I get nervous reading a novel because I would rather be reading nonfiction.

I got bad grades in arithmetic because I hated school and they graded by the answer, not by the process. It was only in college that I succeeded in passing algebra. Suddenly I got an "A" in it and I thought, "There's something interesting going on here." I decided to try algebra again and I figured that it would open doors to a variety of majors. I was discriminated against in my junior college electronics program because they said that blind people had to use their heads instead of their hands. Then I called up the man who wrote a braille magazine that I was hooked on and he said, "I guess if I hadn't been blind I would have been an electronics engineer. But I've been forced to use my hands instead of my head."

In high school I had done poorly in chemistry because performing the test in braille took so much time that I got fewer questions answered. But when college came around it seemed that the teachers were not particularly interested in the time it took to do things and sometimes they would give me the tests orally, which meant that I could operate at the same speed as sighted people. I started getting more "As" and I began to understand the principles. So I was involved in science until my junior year in college, when I discovered that there were not going to be any jobs for scientists because the only jobs available to scientific people were in war instruments and we had all the war instruments we needed. So I became interested in taking survey courses, and that was probably the most broadening thing I have ever done. I took any course that was an introduction to anything, and I got to like them. That further reinforced the idea that books contained information broader than what you get from school and from talking to people, because most people do not read the range of material that I am interested in.

I have participated in the evaluation of reading machines. We all thought we wanted them. Years before that, we all thought we wanted ultrasonic laser canes and mobility aids. And yet when they came around, when we actually had these devices, we realized that there was some trade-off in convenience. I do not want to spend time reading a print book with an Optacon. I would rather either read another book

that is available to me in talking book or braille, or arrange a readership system. I think about reading machines often because I wonder, as an engineer, what it is that sparks the development of some major project. Twenty million dollars went into mobility aids and probably ten million or more went into reading machines, and they do not seem to address what we want. I suppose it is a question of convenience in dealing with the print format. It would be better if I had shortcuts to access without fooling with the books, and I think that a paperless society would be better. But again, I thought that reading machines would be an improvement.

I could always count on the librarians at the regional library, when I was a child, to make better choices for me than I could. I never did understand how and I still don't. I guess they knew what was a child's book and I did not. I would pick out a book that was too slow, and I just would not be able to finish it. I ordered a book on Edison which was way over my head, although it so fascinated me that I read it all the way through. After that, the librarians knew to send me a book on clocks!

But it is really a question of blind people not knowing what is out there to choose from. People who are information-isolated don't make educated choices about what books they want to read, or what movies they want to see, because their knowledge of what books or movies they can choose from is so incomplete. Sighted people cannot understand that. For example, when sighted volunteers take blind people to a museum they ask the blind people, "What do you want to see?" They become impatient when the blind people answer, "We don't know. What is there?" It doesn't occur to most people that we want to know about everything there is, so that we can go through the process of eliminating for ourselves what doesn't interest us, just as sighted people do all the time.

I would say that the only way folks will know enough to look for their choices and to examine things on a fair basis is if something is done with educational institutions. There should be some discussion between the educational institution and the library other than the explanation of the Dewey decimal system. There was never this discussion in school. Books became a task of homework. When I chose my own books for homework, I looked for the smallest book that I could find. The fact is that a librarian could have talked to my teacher and in ten minutes figured out more about me than I had the ability to figure out on my own and then recommend some good books for me.

I do not blame anybody. People who run libraries have enough to do. People who run educational institutions have the wrong priorities;

they have enough to do just to keep a finger in the dike of their ever-collapsing system. I tend to think that librarians have their hearts in the right place, anyway. In education the competition is cruel and unusual punishment, and it is not possible to teach discipline and try to cultivate a love for exploring at the same time, in the same room. The institution's main purpose is to teach people to be good company workers, but schools also pretend to address literacy. Both these things are taught in the same room and an association is made between the two. That is what happened to me. It became obvious to me that an assignment always followed reading. There was a goal other than reading for the sake of reading.

I am discovering that I can actually do work that is interesting to me and that alone can maintain my interest in libraries, even though libraries might not have anything to do with my work. It's an attitude.

Blind people are used to being isolated from the general bustle of activity. I am isolated and I am very used to it. But we do have an internal network. I talk to somebody on the phone, or send tape letters, and that person will say, "*Men in Mathematics* is really good!" So we do have a community involvement of sorts that most people do not see. Or at least we create the illusion that we have community involvement. Most of us have not gotten into the habit of constructive browsing in a library. I go to the subregional library and I do the wrong thing. I read all the titles and pick out a book to take home. Then I try to read it at home and yawn. I could have found out that I wouldn't be interested right at the library. I could have listened to the book on the talking-book machine there. It has never occurred to me to use the cassette encyclopedia at the library. I do not know where to start with it because if I start reading the index, I will want to read everything. I do not know how to use the library. I have never watched anybody do it and I am just simple enough to have a problem of not being able to create that kind of habit for myself. I am sure I will do it, though, because the more I visit the library and try to browse, the more it becomes apparent to me that some change in the foundation of how all this is done has taken place. This is a social change that I am not used to. I think people need to be more aware that blind people are not used to libraries. How to change this situation I do not know, except to make the library a fun place to hang out. That works with our subregional library. Blind people are actually taking a long bus ride to be there. If that were to happen everywhere, if libraries were socially attractive and there were interesting people at the libraries, then that would encourage more blind people to use them.

I would like a programmable library machine. If I wanted to, I could

say, "Eliminate the prefaces and give me a look at the index." The machine would have to be able to present me with the part of the book I wanted, on command. I would like a machine that would tell me something about the organization of a book. I have a book on integrated circuits that I was reading with the Talking Optacon. On every page I felt that I was coming in on the middle somewhere. I did not know that in the back of the book there were technical briefs, short pieces, and once I found that out, it was a real shortcut to the book. I needed the layout information on this book; it took me two days to find out what it would have taken a sighted person five minutes to find out.

Blind people are overeducated. They are intellectually dying, decaying, but they have been educated, reeducated, tested, retested, and retrained. They have been around literature before, although the matter of self-image is probably more important than exposure. That is probably it. One of the things that library school students should be taught is that the blind have poor self-images. They have not been taken seriously so often that they no longer expect to be. If somebody takes them seriously it takes a long time for them to figure it out.

I think that the more print-handicapped people are exposed to literature and encouraged to read it, the more they can learn to make their own choices and demand the availability of books by certain authors. I do not know how that will happen, but the change will come slowly. Most talking-book patrons are in their homes, waiting for the postman to come with their books. The more handicapped people are employed in different walks of life and the more involved in community activities they become, the more they will take it for granted that they use their public library the same way they use the restaurant down the street.

I was often read to as a child, by my mother or my sisters or my brother. I also saw many movies and was exposed to other media as well. When I started school I thought, "Oh, good, now I can get books just like everybody else." But the books did not look the same. There were all these little dots and I was not prepared for that. It was a real psychological blow that I could not read everything like my brother and sisters. I had practically memorized the books that were read to me but I could not apply that to braille. I was not a very good student when I first started out in school, although I was always bright at home. I felt almost as if I had two lives. There was my school life, in which I was just going through the motions, and there was my home life, in which I enjoyed so much reading and music. I hated school and I wanted to go to my brother's and sisters' school. I went to a public elementary school for blind children, and since I had never been around blind people before I did not know what it was all about.

When I was eight years old, I had to wake up at six o'clock to go to school; it was always a battle to get me up. My brother, who also hated to get up, would get up and read to me; that was the only way that they could get me to eat breakfast and be motivated to go to school. He read me *Huck Finn* when I was eight, in dialect. He just opened the book and read it with the proper accent, and I was awake instantly.

In the third or fourth grade I had two teachers who read to the class

every day and that turned around my life. You see, I had figured that all the good books were in print, not braille, because my brother had read me *Grimm's Fairy Tales, Huck Finn,* and *Little Women.* (When he read *Little Women* he said, "Don't tell any of my friends I'm reading this to you, or I'll kill you!") The teacher read *B is for Betsy* to us and I really got involved in the book. I went into the school library and found that *B is for Betsy* was in braille, and that turned my attitude around. I checked the book out and I finished it before the teacher did. There were real books in braille and I had not thought there were. I, who had been an average reader, all of a sudden just leaped into it, and when I found out that *Little Women* was in braille, you could not keep me away.

I had an uncle who was very much a father to me, and he and I found a small student braille library. It was incredible! I walked in there and found so many books. Then I got involved with the regional library and I could check out an entire ten-volume book if I wanted to. I read *Gone With the Wind* in braille when I was thirteen. What did I get out of reading then? I got escape and some notion of how to deal with all the changes that were starting to happen inside me. I read about love and how heroes and heroines adapted to it. I experienced different outlooks on life. Reading made me want to learn more about the world and to really begin to deal with it, not to escape. It made me want to find out who I was.

I would go to the public library with my brother and sisters. I knew the librarian and I would help them carry their books. I would say, "What did you get today?" and they would read me three or four titles. I was extremely jealous because they had all those books and I wanted to read what they were reading. It is still true today; every time I hear of a book my brother is reading I call the regional library and say, "Do you have anything by so-and-so?" When I went to the regional library it was different from the public library because it was so huge and the librarians were not used to people's browsing. When I would go in, I would talk to the man there and say, "I'd like to see some books." He would open up the golden gate and let me go through and just browse. He was nice about it. They did not prevent me from browsing. In fact, I think they were secretly pleased that I did, but they just were not set up for it.

These days I use the subregional library. It still amazes me that I can just walk in there at any time and look through the shelves of taped books and talk to the librarians. I love the fact that I can go in there and browse and make my own choices. I do not have to know what I want immediately. When I order books through the mail, I am obli-

gated to look through the *Braille Book Review* and say, "Okay, I want number 12568 and number 17801." There is something that is not real about that. You can't look the book over, and you don't really know that you don't like it until it is mailed to your house. You get much more immediate feedback at the subregional library in person, and you have the freedom to go on a rainy day if you want to, and spend the entire day exploring books. That should be a basic right. Blind people are not used to the fact that they can go to a library. But I was raised with going to libraries with my brother and sisters and I understand the concept. I want to use the library just like everybody else. But I can see how other blind people could be very isolated from that process and very intimidated by it. But once they know that it's okay and it's safe and they're welcome in the library, then sure they will come out. And if some of them do not, so what? At least they can call up and talk to their librarian and say, "I heard a television interview with so-and-so. Do we have any books by him?" That's more than they ever had before.

I think exposure will help blind people overcome the problem of not knowing enough about authors and books. Public libraries could send out flyers saying, "We encourage everybody to come in." Maybe public libraries do not have cassette books but they have plenty of records that can be checked out and maybe book discussions that handicapped people can participate in, where they can get a nice dose of knowledge. And some time blind people are going to have to learn to think. This is what disturbs me. Blind people are so used to having things done for them. After all, the books come in the mail. They are used to the fact that things are going to be done for them and they think, "I don't have to participate. I don't have to think." But they sure can complain about what is made available by the Library of Congress. With television and radio everything is handed to them. If they do not want to think, they do not really have to. There is enough information being handed out that way that they do not have to put out much effort.

Librarians should not be warehouse keepers. That is what it comes down to. The older people who have become blind want their mystery stories because that is what they had when they were sighted. It is scary enough to be blind, and they do not necessarily need to learn something new. But after they go through that initial year or two of shock, many of them will open up and be willing to learn something. I have seen that happen.

I have always wanted to own books. I used to have dreams when I was little about having my own little room filled with books. They would be mine and I would not have to give them back. I love books. I

always buy books for people as gifts. They are great, treasured things for me.

I hear about new books and authors on the radio and also on the "Dick Cavett Show." I am a big fan of Dick Cavett and he has done so much to expose me to different people that I never would have known about otherwise. He has many writers on his show and I begin to get curious. I begin to question and I want to learn more. National Public Radio is very good about having a book review segment on their "All Things Considered" morning edition, so I have been exposed to a great deal. I think my avidness about reading is unique. I was on the listener advisory board for our radio reading service and I am the only one on the board who would come in with book suggestions. They would ask me, "How do you know so much about literature." And I'd say, "I listen."

Jim McGinnis

Blind and physically handicapped people should have a standard library just as everybody else has a library, with a book collection comparable to that available to the general public. The book collection available from the National Library Service is now bad. The library also should offer all the programming that branch libraries offer such as book discussions, poetry readings, seminars on job opportunities and writing resumes, and meetings concerning not only local community issues but also issues of importance to the handicapped. Libraries like this for the blind and physically handicapped should be all over the country in areas where there is a sufficient population to warrant service. The concept of library service involved here differs greatly from what is currently available through the National Library Service system, in which regional libraries for the blind and physically handicapped act mainly as book storage and distribution centers with very little personal contact with readers and little or no programming in the library itself. A new development in the National Library Service system in the past decade has been the subregional library, a library on the local level which provides better service to the handicapped and which should now begin to be integrated into all public library systems.

I started realizing the potential of local library service for the blind and handicapped no more than five years ago. As a member of and leader in the organized blind movement I had been trying to improve social and rehabilitative services for the blind for twenty years, and for all those years my only understanding of the word "library" was the books that I would receive through the mail or the order forms I would fill out in order to receive those books. My only concerns then were whether I got the books on time and whether I got the books that I asked for. I was somewhat concerned about how broad the collection was and vaguely concerned about who was running the service all the way from the head of the National Library Service on down to the state librarian for the blind and handicapped.

Then, when the subregional library came along I was opposed to it, simply because I thought it meant a watering down of the books that were available, and at the time I thought that the books that were available were not very good. I had no idea that the general public had libraries as they do, that they could go in and pick out their books, sit and read the newspaper, sit down and rest there, or just use the bathroom. The library was their place. If they were particularly interested in some facet of culture, some controversy, or if they wanted to get more knowledge about anything from astronomy to holistic health they could go to the library on occasion and hear a presentation on the subject. They could become involved in the presentation or talk with the speaker and get more knowledge about any subject that interested them.

I did not use a public library, I think, because I had a feeling of being out of place. I had had one experience in a public library when I went there to find a book on gambling. I had to have someone go with me and when we asked the lady at the desk she said, "Yes, we have that title. The number is such and such." My sighted companion and I went to find the book. Blind people have no experience of doing that. You are as helpless as a kitten when you go into a public library and have to depend on other people to help you find what you want. These people generally don't know what to do with blind people. So my only comfortable alternative was to get books through the mail, assuming that books on the subject I was interested in were available.

When I found out that there was a broad range of potential library service, I became angry with myself for not realizing something so obvious. It is now so obvious to me that the library profession, through all of the years of serving the public, has been progressive and has come up with new ideas, such as the bookmobile and books for jail inmates, and various programs that invite the public to get more information. At the same time the blind, as a segment of the population, and agencies serving the blind, including the National Library Service, have failed to keep pace with enlightened library thought. I was no more enlightened than the rest of the people involved were. If I had known about public libraries long ago and the circumstances had been such that I could have used public libraries, I am certain that I would have been much more aggressive in demanding that local library use by the handicapped be promoted by library professionals everywhere. I have a feeling that other blind people had the same limited understanding of public libraries as I did.

When the value of the subregional library became so apparent five years ago, and a large number of us patrons began using it in person and

with a great degree of independence, the library became something that we all wanted to protect and help to expand. The services of the library grew so rapidly in two years that it became obvious that we as patrons had to begin agitating for more space and staff, which in our minds would have constituted equal service. We talked about the problem with the library administrators, the library trustees, the board of supervisors, and the mayor and found to our chagrin that all these decision makers were uninformed about the potential for this particular type of library service. They responded to our efforts to inform them with a combination of antagonism and sympathy. Such is the case to this day. We were even told how lucky we were to be able to receive our books through the mail, as if that is any substitute for full library service where we live. I think, though, that these efforts by consumers had the positive effect of drawing the attention of the National Library Service staff and a large number of subregional library users to the fact that the subregional library can be a giant step forward in library services to blind and physically handicapped people.

I am not sure what part library schools and practicing librarians should play in improving library services for the blind and physically handicapped. The obvious solution, of course, would be for library schools to accept the fact that people with disabilities are just people like everyone else and that providing library service to them in the formats of recorded, braille, and large-print material is not complicated at all. The people who use these formats can use them just as easily as other people can read print. If that idea is accepted, the whole idea of having a standard library system which includes this type of service to the blind and physically handicapped as a matter of course is simple. It is certain that people who are instructing in library schools, their students, and practicing librarians have a residue of feelings about people with disabilities. Yet I have found that the more information that people have, especially those who have good minds, the easier it is for them to see that disabled people are just people, people who can operate quite well with the proper adaptations.

I have been in the business for so long that I have a hard time isolating library service from all the other services to the handicapped that involve a certain put-down for people who are trying to get service. When people are working with the handicapped in a library situation they usually don't have to deal with the areas of patrons' lives outside of their library interests. Librarians do not get the full impact of a blind person's disappointment or anger at experiencing condescension during a job interview, for instance, but librarians still need to be aware of the psychological barriers that blind people have to overcome

when they begin to use a library in person—or even when they venture to call the librarian. With successive disappointments and put-downs from the bureaucracies that are serving them, it takes a great deal of courage for the handicapped to decide to approach yet another bureaucracy—the library. If the librarian recognizes all that is involved in such a person's visit, then the resulting admiration should dispel any feelings of sympathy or paternalism on the part of the librarian.

Winifred Downing

Traditionally, local libraries have had no interest at all in the handicapped. I could never have predicted the kinds of things that are now being offered at our subregional library; I could never have asked for those things because I just couldn't have guessed that they could be done. I would never have thought of the library's distributing voter information. I would never have thought of the library's getting together articles from local magazines and recording them. It was something that I had never seen done so I could not have asked for it because it had never entered my mind that it could happen. One way to stimulate change is to try these things in your own library with a small group of people, to see whether they like it, and then if they do it will take off.

I lost my sight when I was a year and a half old, so I learned braille very young. When I went to school I remember hearing the teacher say to my friend Bernice, "Bernice, you should really be getting books from the library. You're old enough now and you're a good enough reader." So I heard about all those books, and I went home and lied to my mother, saying "Mom, Miss Coburn said today that I should find out about this library and she gave me the name and address. Here it is." But it bothered me. I knew I had lied. And when I came home from school the next day I told my mother. She said, "Anybody can go to the library." I thought you had to be told by your teacher before you could go. So my mother went to the library, the braille library in Chicago. This was in 1933, and they did not have very many books. I can still remember the first book I got. It was called *Wee Ann* and I thought it was wonderful. There were so few books, though, that you could not have a second one until you had sent the first book back. I would try hard not to finish a book right before the weekend. That was one of my priorities all my young life and even when I was seven or eight I was mapping this out. It was a lifeline for me, like food. I could not do without those books.

We had very few books that were for children, so I read *David Copperfield* when I was in the fourth grade because there was nothing else to read. I remember thinking that it was boring, but still it was there and it was something to read. There were other books that I can remember not liking at all, but I would not think of not reading them from cover to cover because there were not many to choose from. It was around this time that I got my first magazine, the *Mathilda Ziegler Magazine,* which came in a big roll with the braille pages all rolled up. I can remember spending so much time trying to get those pages unrolled so I could read them, and because my hands were small it was hard to force them back. In those years, we were not permitted to have a talking-book machine until we were eighteen, but my piano teacher got me one somewhere and borrowed books that she thought were good for me. People were very busy supervising reading in those days.

I had friends in the neighborhood who read print and sometimes they would read me print and sometimes I would read them braille. My sighted friends would go to the library and take out four or five books at a time and I would say, "Imagine this luxury—four books!" There was no library at my school but we did have a braille dictionary and a few reference books and story books. Most of our textbooks were not in braille; they were read to us. We had one room in which about fifteen of us each had a reader, and we sat two at a desk and everybody read out loud. The bedlam was unbelievable, but we learned to concentrate. I swear I could have been read to in Grand Central Station and I would not have missed a word.

I got to visit the regional library very rarely. It was up on the north side of Chicago and it was understood that nobody would go there. If we went, people were happy to meet us but we were interfering with operations. There was no one there to receive people who came in. You could visit and they would be very nice, but it was obviously not set up like any other library. I had been to the public library with my sighted friends and had walked around the stacks with them. I knew how other libraries worked but ours did not work the same way.

As I have gotten older, I have noticed that I would so much like to read what everybody else is reading—when they are reading it, not a year later. I remember trying to get *Forever Amber* when everybody was reading it, and no one could even speculate about when I could get it in talking books. Things have improved, though. I could get a cassette copy of the *Thornbirds* and read it when everybody else was reading it. And when my daughter went to Hawaii, I was able to get a cassette copy of James Michener's book and read it while she was there.

The organized blind took an extremely dim attitude toward subre-

gional libraries when that concept was introduced, and I must say I joined them. We had so few copies of anything anyway and we thought that the collections were going to get watered down and spread around and would be in the keeping of librarians who knew very little about the service and cared less. We thought what would happen is that we would wind up with fewer books to read than we had before. But it did not work that way. We had to eat crow. We began having many activities centered around the subregional library. I never went there as much as I wanted to, but I received benefits from those activities and the ideas that came out of the meetings. We realized how much a local library could do to answer people's needs in a way that no central library could. Even people in the organized blind movement who strongly felt that they should be loyal to the organization had to say that the subregional was really working out well. Whatever anyone said, it was not watering down the collection and it was, in fact, meeting our needs far better than anything we had ever had like it before. Never before had I had any local literature to read. I had never heard anything from a local newspaper or magazine on a regular basis, I had never heard anything published for my city alone, or anything concerning the election in my city. I spent my life with books and education, so it is not that I had removed myself from where these things were available. They just had not been available before.

I have used our local branch libraries, especially when the children were growing up, and it seemed that the staff was never the slightest bit interested in helping me when I went in there. I guess the librarians reason that there is a special library for people like me and that they really need not concern themselves. Maybe they think, "The talking-book librarian knows all about them and has the special equipment. Therefore I needn't do anything." But all librarians should have more information to give to handicapped people, because in many cases they are the only link to the outside world that handicapped people have. Handicapped people are generally out of school and professionals such as ophthalmologists do not know anything. So the only link that most handicapped people have is their library. If more librarians understood that, they would understand what a tremendously important function they have. And this function is not just to get people books to pass the time of day, but to get them the information that they need in order to live. Sighted people take information so much for granted. I think what would most help the library system would be to take some of the administrators and make them function at our level of reading availability for a week. They just would not believe the things that they take for granted.

Librarians should like books, but people are more important. Anyone who does not like to deal with people should not go into this special field, because there is no way to meet the reading needs of such a disparate population other than by liking people and being challenged by the things they want to know and helping them find solutions. Personnel has everything to do with how successful the library is. Many jobs are not interesting and people keep them only to earn a living. Unfortunately, that is what you see everywhere you go. To my mind that would be so boring.

We have done many things to try to get more space for our library, including visiting the legislators and petitioning the mayor. It just seems that we did everything we had ever been told to do politically. I do not think that handicapped people as a group constitute a large enough voting segment of the population to have political clout for something like the library. I saw the same thing when I went with our group to lobby legislators this spring. We went from office to office and we never saw one legislator or even a major aide. But the retired citizens, who were up there the same day for some piece of legislation, had busloads of people and many legislators had time to come out and talk with them. All the handicapped people in the state who can travel do not make up a fraction of the number in the retired persons group. Even if all the blind groups in the state were working together there would not be enough people to start something that would be in any sense revolutionary.

We are still dependent on someone in the library who cares enough to get things going. I think that is the real issue, to have interested, curious, and approachable staff.

At work we talk about books often. People there will say, "Carolyn, have you read this book yet?" And I say, "No, but I'll look for it at the library next time and see if it's on tape yet." And they know that I like mystery stories, particularly John MacDonald, so they will tell me when he has a new book out. What amazes me is that I do not know many young blind people, in my age group, who read. I have talked to several young blind people who do not read. I find that amazing, because when I talk to friends who are not blind, they seem to read a great deal.

I was born here in San Francisco, in Chinatown, and my parents were from China. My parents were very strict about speaking Chinese at home, so when I went to school I really did not know any English. I remember playing games in kindergarten and I would always miss the ball. I thought that everybody else was seeing the way I was seeing, and I could not understand why I was not doing so well. To make a long story short, the teachers thought that I was retarded and I was put into the retarded class. My sister, who is also legally blind, and I would go to the eye doctor. He would give us the eye chart and whenever we got something right he would say, "Good girls." When we got something wrong he acted as if we did something bad, so we memorized the eye chart and got everything right. It was not until I was ten years old that a really sharp teacher realized that it was not because I was retarded that I was doing so badly. Then I went to a special school. And now when I think back on my experience, I get angry because I think that somebody should have known something. Even though I was able to play tricks on them by passing the eye test, somebody should have known. My parents would not admit it. They are from China and they do not like handicapped children in the first place. I hate myself, too, for not speaking up and saying something, because after a while I knew that my problem was that I could not see.

When I went to the special school with the resource room for the

visually handicapped, that was not very desirable either, but it was better for me. I remember that many of the school assignments were not in braille or large print, and my sister and I would come home and wait for my brother to come home from Chinese school and read our lessons to us. He would take turns with us and then he would do his own homework. That was a hardship for all of us.

After I graduated from high school I went to college. College was not hard like junior high and high school. When I was going to college, they did not have any special programs for the handicapped, so I had to find readers by posting ads myself. It was good for me to have to do that by myself. I graduated from college in 1974 and got a job with the U.S. Civil Service Commission. I worked there for about three and a half years, then went to the General Services Administration, where I am now. Between times I worked as a VISTA volunteer.

When my sister and I were sixteen or seventeen, a person came out to the house to tell us what blind services we were eligible for. She told us about the library, and at that time we got our books from the regional library. We always got books that we did not want and we would just send them back. We never complained because we thought it was no use, and besides we were keeping the post office in business. Then suddenly we got a letter saying that we could get our books from the library in San Francisco. Even then we thought, "Okay, we're going to get our books from San Francisco. It's no big deal." I never bothered to go visit because it was in the main library and that library is so huge that you get lost when you go in there. A few years later we got a notice saying that the library had moved to a building that was closer to our house. I do not remember when I started going there, but after a couple of times I really enjoyed it. Instead of getting books through the mail and sending them back, I was going to pick them up in person. The library was there a long time before I used it, even though I am very mobile. I just never paid that much attention to it. I never expected to be able to pick out my own books, and once I did it a couple of times I felt, "This is wonderful. I get to choose my own books and wander around just like anybody else. I can get the most recent books, too, not just sit at home and wait for somebody to send me a book so I can send it back."

I did not really know that I liked spy books until I started getting books that I did not like. Then I got a book that I did like and I noticed that it said "mystery" in braille on the side. I started ordering more mystery and spy books, and the more of them I got, the more I liked them. It was hit or miss until then, because I did not know much about books.

I think that there are other people out there who are interested in the talking-book library but are afraid to go out there. If it took me six years to realize what it means, I can imagine that there are others who have never been there and do not know what it is like to go through and pick out your own books. There must be some people like me out there, but you just do not find them. What happens if people are not so mobile? What happens to those people who are not able to make that first step?

It seems even harder to get people involved in the public library. Maybe the public libraries could print a list of some things that are available so that handicapped people would know what is there. If you do not know what is there you cannot use it. I did not know that there were all those civil service exam guides that you could check out, and they would have been really helpful for me. And it is amazing what else is in libraries, besides the kind of books that we get on talking books.

When I was younger, I would go to the public library with friends and they would always to to the catalogue. They would know exactly where to find something because they looked it up. They could go right to the book. I would like to see that happen for us, but I am not sure that it ever will. I want to be realistic about it. I think that blind people are too used to what is being given them, such as books being sent to them, and they do not really know what else they could have. I guess people do not want to put any extra effort into it or to make a big complaint. And even if we do complain that we need more of the services that the sighted people get in libraries, I do not know if people are going to listen to us. I think that the people who are reading talking books now are older people, and they are people who have always been treated badly, it seems to me. And maybe the younger handicapped people have other things that they are doing; maybe reading is not their big interest.

I went to some meetings about the talking-book library and I was scared. I do not speak really well and my English is not very good. I have very strong feelings about the library and speaking to the politicians is scary to me, because they will tell you anything. At first I thought perhaps something would be done, but now it is discouraging. I am tired of those politicians. But then I think that even though it does not seem that our complaints have done anything, if we had not been organized perhaps the talking-book library would be in much worse shape than it is now.

I started volunteering at the library because there were so many things to be done and they had no help. I have done a number of things, including unloading mail sacks and stacking the shelves. I just

did anything that needed to be done. Unloading the sacks was fun, although it took much energy and bending over. There are so many jobs these days where you provide information but you never know that you are actually accomplishing anything. But in a library you are providing a service. I also like to see all the new books coming in. Sometimes I am being selfish in unloading the sacks so that I can get the new books before anybody else.

When people talk about libraries, most people think only about books. Maybe they forget about the human factor. Although librarians are experts at books, at the same time they are dealing with people. Librarians should recognize some of the stereotypical attitudes that they may have toward blind people. They should not assume that a blind person cannot do anything, or cannot walk around the library and browse through the books. And they should not get overly concerned when a blind person runs into something. Do not help them too much, but let them know that you are there. Just say, "Hi. I'm so and so. If you need any help let me know." I think that is just human, and anybody would want to be treated that way, whether they are handicapped or not. Remember, too, that handicapped people are human and some of them are shy. And they rely on hearing instead of seeing. Just remember that eye contact does not mean anything to them. Just say, "Hello." That is all that is necessary.

Sometimes people forget that I am handicapped. At least at work people forget it all the time. They point and say, "It's over there, Carolyn." And I say, "Where? Left, right, forward, backward?" In many ways it is good to have that attitude instead of having them come over and say, "Oh, let me bring you over there." I think people who read this book should know that many handicapped people were brought up to be passive. I was brought up to be passive. As much as we know that passivity is not a good trait to have, we cannot change our personalities much. Just because we are not making much noise does not mean that we do not want a library. And also, if we do not complain that does not mean that we are happy with the situation. It just means that we have learned to accept it.

I am not totally satisfied with what is happening in my career, but I am satisfied in my personal life. I like to hike, I like outdoor sports, and I am able to participate in them. I am happy that there are activities like that available.

Many times I have been told that books could be mailed to me, but I like to go to the library to pick them up. I get a good feeling, taking my old books back to the library in a shopping bag and bringing the new ones home with me. I feel that I am being treated equally when I do this. I walk the five or six blocks from the bus. I feel almost the way I did when I went to the neighborhood library as a child.

I was not blind as a child. In fact, it really was not discovered that I was blind until I was twenty-one years old. When I went to school, in Miami, I had a normal childhood and I went to a very good school. I was an above-average student because I knew how to read before I went to school and reading was what I spent most of my time doing. Although I lived in a segregated neighborhood, we had our own library and I used to go and check out books. When I returned the books, our librarian would have me tell her what I read, to make sure that I was not just checking out books for the fun of it and not reading them. It was like having to give a book report.

When I was about nine years old, the teacher noticed that I was holding things close to my face, and I had to go up to the blackboard to read it. My parents took me to eye doctors then, and all through school, but the doctors never explained what was wrong and they told me that eyeglasses would not help. My eyesight started slowly deteriorating and I began to do less well in school. A few years later I was transferred to a school with a sight-saving class, but it was almost too late then to give me the education that I really needed. I went to high school with the other children and although teachers showed me some consideration, I was more or less left out, an outsider. I still attended, though, and sometimes I wonder how I got through it, not really being a part of the class. I was almost too embarrassed to do anything in class until one day a teacher told me something that helped me quite a bit. She told me that although I could not see very well, I could learn much from listening. Then I really started listening.

When I graduated from high school, the future looked very dark to me. I was seventeen and really worried about how I was going to survive. I tried to get jobs and I worked very hard, while trying to hide the fact that I was partially sighted. People would always find out. I went to live with an aunt in Rochester, New York, and I had the idea that I wanted to become a telephone operator. I had given up my dreams of ever going to college, so I went to the Rochester telephone company. I could not see the application very well, and although I had a high school diploma they told me it was useless to apply because of my poor vision. Then I went to one of the hospitals to get a job, and I took a friend with me to fill out the application. It was just a cleaning job and I had to be deceitful to get it. Eventually they found out that my vision was poor and they threatened to fire me several times, but I was always able to save myself by starting to cry. I really wanted to work hard, even if it was only cleaning rooms, mopping floors, and washing out sinks. I kept thinking, "If they fire me how am I going to survive?" I tried to save money, just in case that happened.

There was an association for the blind in Rochester and a lady came out to see me. I remember her to this day. She said, "Hold on to your job as long as you can. When you hear on the radio, 'hire the handicapped,' that's as far as it ever goes. Nobody ever hires the handicapped."

Later on I did get recorded books, but at that time I was so worried about survival that I did not read much. I remember the first two talking books I ever read, though. The first was *Anna and Her Daughters,* by D. E. Stevenson, which fascinated me, and the second was *Of Human Bondage.* But that was all I read for a while. I was trying to keep up my appearance and show people that I was a person, and I wanted to prove that I could support myself.

Then I came to San Francisco and when I was looking for work here I talked to a counselor on the phone. He didn't know what race I was and asked me. He said, "Race doesn't matter to me, but there are some people who won't hire you." He suggested that I go to the welfare department since I was not eligible for rehabilitation yet. I had a little money saved and I used that to live on. I never did go to the welfare department. I went to adult school instead and caught up on my reading and spelling.

In adult school there were many students—mostly foreign people and minorities—who had not had opportunities. At adult school I began to feel that I belonged, for the first time in my life, and I began to get some of my determination back. I even secretly took the federal civil service exam, which I passed with a fairly high score of 89.5.

Then I went to the Social Security Administration for an interview. Because of my experiences of sneaking in places to get jobs and not letting them know that I was legally blind, I was afraid. The lady asked me the usual questions and then she asked, "Do you have any physical problems?" I looked around to see if anyone was listening and then I almost whispered to her, "My eyesight is very bad." And she said, "Oh, we know about that. Is there anything else?" That was in 1968 and I stayed in that job until 1974. I enjoyed it, but I began to think about getting a college education and I decided to quit work and go to college before I got too old.

That was when I got acquainted with the library and its services. It was a big boost to find out that I would not always have to depend on other people to read to me. I could just go and get a machine and have the books read, almost like magic. Even though the library did not have many textbooks, the books that I did get were a big help.

When I go into the regular public library, I think to myself that they should have people there who are trained to help the sightless as well as the sighted. Why should it always seem that we are from Mars? I had a conflict there one time over something simple that I wanted. I needed some information about judicial review for my constitutional law class, and I asked if I could get someone to photocopy some pages out of the encyclopedia for me. I was told that they did not have anyone who could help me and that I should go out to the subregional library. I said, "Why should I go all the way over there when you have the information here?" I finally got to talk to someone in charge and a man started helping me. He said, "I don't know why they have the library for the blind way out there in the middle of nowhere." He did not understand either why I should have to go to a special library. It got me thinking that maybe people were ashamed of having us come to use the main library and that was why the library for the blind was so far away. The man got me what I needed. Afterward I was frightened about going back to the library again. I thought, "I could go there again and be attacked or something." That had happened to me once—I was beaten up by a security guard in a beauty school. I even wrote a piece about it called "Justice for All."

But despite these experiences I try not to become a hermit. I have a good friend who lives a couple of blocks from my house and I walk home from visiting her at night, just to show that I have not become too paranoid, that I haven't given up.

I do not think I will ever feel comfortable in the public library again. I guess everybody there thought that I was coming in to make a disturbance, but I came in asking for help. I think I came in in a nice

way and I didn't demand anything. It's supposed to be a public library and it is supposed to serve the public. I am part of the public, even though they don't think so. If a sighted person can come in and the librarians will look up something that will take five minutes or so, why can't they do that for a blind person?

Library school students should begin by trying to understand handicapped people. It would be better if future librarians would just assume that they were going to serve us, instead of having their minds made up by other people who have not served us and have decided that we should be limited. Then it would not seem as if it were more work for them to help a handicapped person. Everything is geared to making a library comfortable for people who have no physical problems. About the only people I have found who really make an effort to serve the handicapped are people in the airline business. I am not trying to give them a plug, but most of the time they take a joy in helping us.

I think libraries are an important part of life. Several presidents have educated themselves through libraries. Reading a book inspires me; I discover how much I do not know. That makes me try to learn more, and I find that there is always something more to know.

I would like the world to be a simpler place, where a person is not judged by how much money he makes or his race or his appearance. I would like a world where everyone would be recognized, even a person that is a so-called reject from society.

If I could change the library for the blind, I would put it in a more central place. When I go there, I notice that everything is piled up as in a warehouse; nothing looks attractive. Other libraries are fairly attractive and clean; they do not look like warehouses. I guess people think "Why make it attractive for them? They can't see it anyway."

Agencies that work with the handicapped really do not understand us and in fact try to discourage us more than encourage us. I think they want us to feel that we have no potential, that we will never fit into this world. They do it subsconsciously; they try to pick such occupations for you as having a vending stand or being a typist. People have a superficial superiority complex relating to race and handicaps. I have even noticed that people at the blind center say, "I can see better than so-and-so." That is their way of feeling a little superior.

McAteer High School Students:
Charlene Taylor, Jay Yi, Tracy Evans, Roy Younger

Charlene: I like to read love stories, mysteries, and things like that; I also like to read print books on my own sometimes. I like the tapes and the books, but I'm not too crazy about the records. I would like to see more books on cassette. If I wrote a book myself I guess it would be about a visually handicapped person, or a love story dealing with my life and my friends. I guess I would be the star and I would write it in soap-opera style.

It is hard to be in school, being visually handicapped, but you get used to it. I really have no problem except that I cannot read really small print and things that are very light. Other than that, I function like somebody who has no handicap. I use what I have the best that I can.

I would like to go to college and take some counseling courses so that I could help other students who are visually handicapped. I would like to help other people to accept their handicap and feel that they can do whatever they set out to do. My teachers, my mother, and many other people have taught me that. So many times I have given up on things, but my mother has really been behind me.

I like the library fairly well. They seem to have pretty good taste in tapes. The system is good and I look forward to the catalogs that come to my house. If several of us students who use the library could get together, maybe we could make a play or a book of our own. A tape of our own would be great.

I'm eighteen years old and I'm in the twelfth grade. I am happy because I look back and feel that I have really accomplished something. Just recently I felt like quitting school, but I decided to come back because I have gone too far to quit. But I never thought I would see the day when I graduated from high school.

Jay: I will be graduating in June and I hope to go to college. I have applied to the University of California at Berkeley, Stanford, Harvard, and Columbia and I hope to major in computer science. My grade

point average is 3.95. I have medium intelligence but I work hard and stay up late at night doing my reading assignments. Sometimes it is exhausting to try to read twenty or thirty pages in braille; it is not that easy, and sometimes it gets really boring. But I only have six months to go, and I am really excited; I would like to go to graduate school, get a Ph.D., and do some research to improve humanity. I would like to improve the Optacon and develop other things for the visually handicapped.

I still read other things besides schoolwork. Recently I read *David Copperfield,* by Charles Dickens. It was a long book and I really enjoyed it. I got a great deal out of that book, including the fact that all of David's unhappy experiences really made him more mature. He has gone through all those experiences and I am sure he would be grateful for that—that is if he were real. I know it's fiction but I'm sure that anybody who went through those experiences would be grateful for them. I also read about Franklin Delano Roosevelt and I thought he was an energetic, intelligent, and super person. He was also handicapped like us. One of the greatest presidents was handicapped, and that shows that we may be handicapped physically but in intellectual ability or motivation we are not really different from sighted people.

I like to meet people. I like to participate in discussions on controversial political subjects. In fact, recently we had a very heated debate on the topic of abortion. We meet outside of school in political committees made up of minority students and discuss topics such as tax cuts, nuclear power, the Equal Rights Amendment. During my spare time I also listen to music, play the piano, collect stamps, and go bowling. I wish I had seventy-two hours in a day.

I read part of Dickens' *Christmas Carol* in braille for the marathon reading program at the library. I was nervous through the whole reading because it was my first time reading in public. I think more activities like that would be great because it is a nice gathering of people; you get to meet each other and have nice entertainment. People do not do that sort of thing every day.

I thought of writing a book about algebra, because I am very interested in algebra. Actually I think that I was probably gifted in algebra because I never did my homework or studied or read the book, but still I always managed to get an "A" without any problem. I learned a great deal. I would write about algebra in a way that is different from the books I know. I would write only about the theory and practical applications.

I think that reading is a pleasurable thing for anybody. You learn much from reading and I just wish that more books were available on

tapes. A great many books are available, but when new books come out it would be very valuable to have more of them. Maybe more of us should try to use the library more than we do now. In college the library will be one of my very important sources, because without a library I would not be able to make it through the door of college.

Tracy: I am a freshman and English is my favorite subject. I love it. If I wrote a book it would probably be a love story because I am interested in romance. In one book that I started to write, before we had a flood in our house and I lost it, I was the heroine. It was very modern, dealing with the family and how I grew up. Some of the things that I wrote about were things that I did, but not all of them. I used a fictitious name, Eileen, which is my middle name.

I love the Laura Ingalls Wilder books. She writes about family ties and the fact that people can be happy through the bad and the good times. I read all her books and it was like watching the characters grow up.

We do not do much reading in English class, though we did just read a book about a ship. I would not like to be a teacher; the way that I acted from the first grade on makes me never want to work with children. I was always doing something to arouse the class and even now, sometimes, I will tell a joke right in the middle of a test.

The library is wonderful. There is so much to choose from there. I also read some of the *Christmas Carol* out loud in braille and I liked it, even though I did sneeze right in the middle of it. Some of the older people reading braille read very well. I must commend them on that. That was really nice and everybody was saying to me, "We know you can read it."

I like to read in braille because it seems that the person who is reading gets more joy out of it than the person who is listening. I like to read Harlequin romances in braille. I love to drown myself in books anyway; my boyfriend says, "You're going to start reading so much that we won't have time for each other." And I say, "That's too bad." He reads all the time, too. He has *Mommie Dearest* and he has stacks and stacks of comic books. He doesn't read to me, but he is going to. I am going to tell him, "Frank, you read to me or else."

Roy: I am currently in my last semester. I can't wait to leave this place. I will probably go on to college and study electronics or astronomy.

I like to read books, especially science fiction. Did you ever read *Caves of Steel,* by Isaac Asimov, or *Fantastic Voyage?* I have also read much science-fact material, such as a book called the *Universe of Galileo and Newton.* That book is very interesting; it tells how the

system of Ptolemy reigned for almost 1,700 years—they thought the earth was the immovable fixed center of the universe. Aristotle supplied his proof, so to speak, that the planets should be running in circles. He actually thought that there was a divine element that guided the planets in circles. He also said that gravity was the tendency of things to fall to earth, just their tendency, which is nevertheless false. It is actually a unity of compact. In other words, you jump and you pull the earth behind you, although it is very negligible. Earth pulls sun, sun pulls earth. It is all unity. That was discovered long before Newton by a man named Kepler, who also disproved the circular orbit theory.

Electronics is a branch of science, actually a branch of physics. Anything with "ics" is a branch of physics. I like physics. Actually, the books that I have read were usually in print, but if I read for a long time it makes my eyes feel as if I am in a smoky room, so I read tapes, too. I like the selection of tapes at the library, though I like peculiar things. I wonder if you might have anything on black holes? I have just read one tape called *Black Holes.*

This summer I thought about writing a book—two science fiction stories which will be linked. The first one I called *The Mutant.* It begins with a shooting scene. A man just held up a bank on a Friday night when the banks stay open until six o'clock. I can imagine it as a movie. I have one of those imaginations. I can imagine the screen is dark and then all of a sudden there's a shooting scene and one of the officers is felled, unfortunately. The man who shot him and robbed the bank is an ordinary earth person. This takes place in California, where the penalty for shooting an officer under certain circumstances is the death penalty. The movie shows parts of the trial. The man has a few weeks before he is to be executed and the scientists argue whether the gases they are using in gas chambers might not cause somebody to mutate. "There will eventually be mutations somehow from these chemicals we have around us." So this man is being executed and they think he's dead. His heart rate never stops and he ends up this huge sucker, seven feet tall, with huge muscles. As he breaks out they are trying to catch him. The man has become immune to being killed. He has become a superbeing, a superman. Everything has become super, even his intelligence, and he is a high school dropout. They are shooting him with uranium-packed bullets because they figure that uranium will kill anybody. As they try shooting at him he fades from view. He is underneath a street lamp and then he just fades out of view.

When I first got these contact lenses back on December 5, I went to

a theater and purposely sat in the back row to see how they worked. I purposely sat in the back row and I even told my doctor about it. I was wishing I had a pellet gun so that I could destroy my bifocals and never have to wear them again.

How about expanding the library in all subject areas? I've even read *Johnny Tremain.* I liked that. It is good historical fiction and I have adapted it to science fiction in my own way. The Englishmen are fighting in their old customary way, while the American rebels have an underground base, literally underground, with computers and other equipment.

It might be interesting to work in the library, repairing something or working on the cassette machines. Maybe I'll do that when, as my friends and I say, I "bust this dump!"

Ashley Bandholtz

Gulag Archipelago was really something. Did you read it? Of course the author began to repeat himself, but I read the whole book, on records, in the library. The oldsters in the senior-citizen groups I go to ask, "Why do you go to the library?" I say, "Because it's nice and warm. It's better than wandering around in the cold." And one of the women in the group asked one of the old fellows there, "Why are there so many women here and so few men?" And he answered, "You either loved us to death or overfed us!" And she said to me, "Wasn't that a terrible thing to say?" I said, "No, he told you the truth. If you ask a question, expect an answer." Some of those women get very insulted about having bus passes that say "senior/handicapped" on them. They tell me they're not handicapped. I say to them, "Could you run a mile in ten minutes?" They couldn't run a mile in ten hours! These are the same ones that ask me why I go to the library every day. And I tell them, "Because it's warm and I listen to talking books."

You would be surprised to learn how many people do not know about talking books. They don't even know they exist, even though talking books are discussed on the radio and television once in a while. I think that people are ashamed to admit that they cannot see. Many people, especially women, are very reluctant to make that admission; they would rather muddle along. When I try to talk to these women about getting talking books, I say, "You can't see. Go down there." I say, "You'll be taken care of. They make it up so nice and they'll mail a machine to you and they'll mail the books to you." They still ask me why I go to the library, and I tell them, "To keep rigor mortis from setting in." I think that library is a wonderful idea. I can spend all day there if I want to, and I do as often as I can, with no restrictions. I'd just as soon listen to the books there as take them home. And occasionally I help people who come in and want their machines fixed when the librarians are busy. People sometimes come around to my table and I let them listen through my earphones to hear what the books sound like, if they haven't heard them before.

Residents of The Sequoias, a retirement home: Helen Reynolds, Thelma Sharp, Gretchen Rice, Emily Ethell, and Marion Johnson

Thelma: The Sequoias is a retirement home in San Francisco and all of us in this group have a visual handicap.

Gretchen: I am no expert. The switch I have is just one button. You push it to the left for sides one and two, and you push it to the right for sides three and four.

Emily: That's the cassette itself. I'm talking about . . .

Gretchen: No, I'm talking about the cassette player.

Emily: The player?

Gretchen: When you put the cassette in, you have to get the right side in order to be able to play it.

Emily: There's a great big 1 or 2 or 3 or 4.

Gretchen: That's the cassette itself.

Emily: I can see that, but I can't see which button to push. But if you tell me that it's the second button, I can surely count to two. That's the only thing that I have any trouble with—that or a tape that somebody has messed up by stopping in the middle.

Helen: I think our group's getting together weekly is very valuable. We talk about the books and help each other fill out the book orders. Sometimes the little card that comes on the cassette or record tells us very little about what the character of the book is, and someone here who has listened to it will report to us about the book. It makes all the difference in the world in getting other people interested enough to read the book. I think we have a good variety of books offered to us, but personally I wish we had more books that made us think, such as books on present-day economics made simple. We need things that make us think, not just things that help us escape. I think we have plenty of fiction and many people who don't feel like concentrating very hard just love a good mystery, but I would like to put in a plug for some of us. When we're occasionally feeling more ambitious we would like a little more food for thought.

I do use radio and I use the television, but I listen more than I look.

It seems to me that my life would have a great black hole in it if I did not have the talking books. They are a major part of my life and have been for a long time. I first learned of them from somebody who was blind. That was before I lived here. Then I got the service for my mother-in-law and it was a lifesaver for her. And now it's a lifesaver for me. We all come to it sooner or later and the service is a wonderful part of my life.

Gretchen: One of my early childhood memories is that every evening my father and my mother would read to me, long after I was able to read for myself. It was just part of our evening. Through that experience I developed a love of reading and a love of books, so it was very disconcerting when suddenly I discovered that I was not reading the written page very well. I tried different methods but the task got increasingly hard. Finally last May I had my first talking books delivered to me, and what a joy they were. They opened up a whole new vista. First I was impressed with the ease with which we could obtain the records and return them, and I was impressed by the catagories of books, any subject that you might desire. I have enjoyed them and, as Helen said, they have opened up so much that would otherwise be blank. I have arrived at the point myself where I feel sorry for all the people who are not eligible.

I like biographies very much. I like books on travel and I like fun books. I had a book the other day on the life of Thomas Edison. I wanted to know more about the man because he lived in West Orange, New Jersey, where I did. I had seen his laboratory there and I had seen him occasionally. He was such an eccentric old fellow.

I enjoyed this group thoroughly. There is an exchange here and people tell you whether or not they enjoyed a book.

Thelma: The visual difficulty in my case has lasted about twenty years, and for fifteen of those years I have been using talking books. The first machine I had was a large black one that took up the entire table. The books came in black covers with straps and very very heavy. Now I am using the orange-covered talking records and the cardboard-covered flexible discs, which I like very much because they are easy to handle. The talking books are my lifeline. I could no longer do without them than I could do without my right arm. I listen to them in the afternoon and in the evening.

I am particularly fond of magazines and because of the magazines I'm doing something that I never thought was possible. I subscribe to *Newsweek* magazine, which has given me a great deal of information about what goes on in the world today. I joined a class called "Great Decisions" with a little fear and trepidation, because I was not sure

that I could keep up with the discussion. To my amazement I found out that I had a wonderful store in my memory of things that I had listened to on my talking magazines.

Having talking books sent to us in this little group is facilitated by our weekly meetings, at which our reader reads us the blurb on each of our talking books before we circulate them among ourselves. Having a library right here in San Francisco means that we can go over there and pick up what we want. We have gone there some afternoons to find out about the new books. My favorite kinds of books are books on travel and biography and also mystery and suspense stories. I also want to say how much I am enjoying that little flat gadget that looks just like a large watch and fits right under your pillow.

Emily: I grew up in a bookish family, from a newspaper-editor grandfather to my father who was a lawyer. We always had books and my Christmas gift, I knew, would be a book each year. I was saying at lunch that once I received one of the first editions of the *Wizard of Oz* and I wish I had it now because it would be quite valuable. I loved my own books and the books that my family read to me. My grandfather and grandmother read to me the same old book several times, and I never complained. They would read me the same silly book over and over. I started my career as a librarian by being a student assistant in the high school library, and I continued right through college. After I finished college, in 1920, I went to library school, to Simmons. When I graduated I went back to the normal school where I had been a student assistant and became the librarian. It was in western Colorado. Then I switched to a similar school in Flagstaff, Arizona.

I came to The Sequoias first, to the branch in Portola Valley. My next-door neighbor lost her sight before I did and she was getting talking books. I envied her being able to sit and listen to a book, little thinking that I would one day use the talking books myself. I take the talking books for granted now. There really is nothing else to take for granted.

You know, anyone can play a phonograph record. When I started to change to cassettes my trouble was, and still is, that the cassette machine that I have has four of those buttons down the side and I cannot read which is the one that I am supposed to hit when I turn the cassette over. I've just been pushing all of them until I get the one that matches what I am reading.

Marion: When I first came to The Sequoias I was eighty and I had just finished making a tapestry rug. Now I'm ninety-two and I've been using the records for four or five years. I walk in the morning and I listen every afternoon. Only one piece of information is really neces-

sary before you read: you must know the title of a book. That's when you must ask somebody to help you.

I have begun to use cassettes after several years, and I find the machine quite difficult to manipulate because there are four buttons or gadgets that you push on one side, and four on the other. You can make the cassette go fast or slow, or louder or softer, but you have to know these buttons and memorize them. I think it is a wonderful invention, though, that on a little tape half an inch wide you can get four hours of a book, by turning it over and so forth. But manipulating the tape is difficult, because you have to have someone help you a little.

I read mostly biographies and I enjoy them very much. I never read Agatha Christie. The last biography I read was of Vermeer, that wonderful artist. I was familiar with some of his paintings. Now I am reading about Rubinstein, the pianist, and it is wonderful because so many famous characters come into his book and he travels around so much. He was also in the war zone part of the time.

If I did not have talking books, I would probably jump out of the window. I walk every morning if the weather is all right and then in the afternoon I read my book. My days would be very long if I didn't have the talking books.

I thought that to say I was ninety-two might help somebody who is discouraged.

Helen: People of our age are wobbly on our feet, besides having poor vision. We feel as if we are taking our lives in our hands every time we have to take the bus or walk a long distance, so we mostly stay at home. The way that having a library right here in our own town is particularly helpful is that when we have a problem we can use our local telephone to ask the question.

Thelma: May I suggest that transportation seems to be the problem? Because of our physical handicap, we have difficulty getting transportation to the library, and that holds some of us back. Once I asked the management here to provide transportation for us so that we could all go to the library, and they would not. I miss the contact with the library and all the nice things that are going on there. I think those activities give you a very nice feeling about what our library is all about. To be able to go there and talk to the staff is something that I enjoy very much, plus I enjoy seeing all the gadgets there are to help us, like the pillowphones.

In this service there is a preponderance of older people. I think that the best people to work in this sort of library are people who have grandmothers and grandfathers. That should help them to understand

us, because we do have a different point of view because of our disabilities.

Helen: It takes endless patience to work with us older people, and a person either has a capacity for it or does not.

Gretchen: The people working in this sort of library should be people who love older people, just the way a teacher should like children.

Helen: For this type of work you certainly need to like people.

Emily: Now in library school they train you for computers. I'm glad I got out of librarianship before that.

James Lyle Cowen

One of my problems is which book to read first. Many of the Thomas Wolfe stories I have heard before. One other book of his that I have been through is called *Of Time and the River.* I am on side five of this one now, and when I get through side twenty-two I'll be through.

There is a difference between Thomas Wolfe and John Dos Passos. Dos Passos does not deal so much with personal life, but more with the events that took place in a thirty-year span. It's history, it's narrative. Thomas Wolfe does not go into the history of the United States, except in a general way. He takes his own background as a farmer's boy living in a small town and he gives you the complete background of the people that lived there. He analyzes his father and his mother and why they were the way they were. Dos Passos really analyzes history, the First World War in Europe. He drove an ambulance so that he would not have to kill people. Later on, he went to Spain and was in the fight against Franco.

I listened to one book that was a marvelous analysis of Malcolm X from childhood on. The book on Lee Harvey Oswald was also a good analysis. The author tells about Oswald's childhood, that he never knew his father, and that he was trying to prove himself in life. He never gained acknowledgment for anything he did and he felt that the only way that he could finally prove he was somebody was to shoot the president. The book on Malcolm X tells that he had a criminal life in childhood and then his older sister somehow got him interested in education. He was a changed man. I could understand those two people, Malcolm X and Oswald, as if I had met them. These books were worth reading, not like some story of somebody who has never existed, or a novel that someone has written off the top of his head just to make money.

This article in *Harper's* concerns the AWACS sale. There is so much in this article that I have gone through it several times. It summarizes everything on this controversy. Everyone in Congress is

involved in it. That is why it is so important.

I was asked to leave the braille class down at the blind center because they claimed that I had alienated many of the volunteer teachers. One woman who had bad breath was offended because I suggested that she could do something about cleaning her dentures, and she refused to work with me. I learned that I didn't belong there. I am a college graduate and the other people there were interested only in fundamentalist religion and baseball. They were not interested in books.

The loss of sight was gradual for me and for many years I didn't do as much reading as I do now with the talking books. But reading was always very important to me. In the war years I had a friend who got me interested in Dostoevsky and I read about five or six of his novels. I also became interested in Marcel Proust, who was always referred to by other writers as the intellectual. Every article on literary criticism gets around to calling Proust the ideal novelist. Those are my two favorite writers—Dostoevsky and Proust. Most people who read Proust get through only the first volume; when you go into a library you will find the first volume is always out, but they have plenty of copies of the other five. Both Dostoevsky and Proust dip into life. They give you an understanding of life that isn't just entertainment. What we get with the mass media is amusement; we don't get knowledge. The kinds of books that I read give me knowledge and understanding of how people are. I understand why Malcolm X was the way he was. He was made by his environment, but he was born with a certain amount of intellect.

I read more now because I want to keep my mind working and I cannot just sit in a chair and do nothing. Reading is my way of being busy, and it makes old age bearable. It gives me happiness. When you have read one book, there is always another book that's related to it. You pass from one thing to another. I miss having people to talk to about the books.

I think that librarians, including the librarians in talking books, need to analyze the possibilities of blind people. They all need talking books, of course, and they all need encouragement in reading. It helps to fill in the time and it keeps their imaginations off themselves and on the world outside. Instead of spending my time in introversion, I spend it more on extroversion and analysis. My interest in the top magazines is part of this. They tell me what we are going through in this country. We are struggling over where our country should be going, and very few Americans are thinking about this.

I read perhaps two books a week, but some of the books are very long. The cassette by Thomas Wolfe that I am reading now is 695

pages long. And *Of Time and the River* was 850 pages long.

The library is different from the blind center because at the library you have to meet the public on a much wider level. And another problem with the library and talking books is that they have to supply material to people on whatever level the people desire. But if you can get people to read there is always a chance that they can be led up a ladder to higher things. Many physically able people have no mental interests, and their lives focus on a small area. Remember *Winesburg, Ohio?*

Some people think about things outside themselves, while others think about themselves; the people who are unhappy are those who think about themselves. They dwell on their misfortunes and mistakes. Almost every day of my life I could dwell on how I lost my job in Modesto. People should immerse themselves in books and study the lives of other people instead of studying their own lives and their own mistakes. You can lose yourself in books, you mull over what has been said, and you incorporate what you can from the books you read. That is why it is so important to get the best books you can, if you are up to them.

Thomas Wolfe gets into poetry. The mental picture that I have is that you are about to get on an airplane when you open the book. You get on the airplane and you run down the runway. That's one level. Then the speed is increased and pretty soon you are soaring. And this is the way I feel about Thomas Wolfe describing his town. He describes the town, and then when he goes into poetry, he goes to a higher level. This is what reading books can do for you. You get into the momentum and then you take off.

Thomas Y. Crowell, Inc., offered me a position. It was not particularly high paying but I got some money and a company car, and they were talking about a couple of territories, neither of which I knew a thing about and neither of which I knew a soul in. I said, "Sure, I'd be glad to do that." I started work in the New York office, supposedly to learn something about the books and get ready for the fall sales conference, when I would hit the road. On the job I saw much of the United States and western Canada which I would never have seen otherwise. I don't regret it. It was a good time in my life to travel.

I continued to work for Crowell for five years and then was let go. I managed to take on a job with Little Brown's medical division, covering the New England territory's nursing schools and medical schools. In 1975 I arrived here and worked in sales and promotion for a small college publisher that was a department of Harper & Row.

I was not stuck waiting for the next promotion in any of those jobs because I did not know where I was going in any of those places. I have always been curious about how things work, and I tried to work hard at my jobs figuring out the nuts and bolts.

When I was back East in 1977 a fellow I used to work with was fired by Holt Rinehart. He asked me if I was interested in starting a cafe-bookstore. Someone he knew had just started a cafe at a bookstore in Washington, D.C., and was making out quite nicely. My friend was interested in trying it in San Francisco and asked me if I had any money that I wanted to invest in something like that. Since my other efforts to find a job had not produced anything of particular interest, I said, "Sure." It was something new and it was related to books. I have always had a fascination with books as things, without really knowing anything about them. I like the esthetics of a book that looks nicely made. So, that was the germ, the seminal aspect as it were, of the Bookplate on Chestnut Street. It is a middle-class bookstore with books printed abroad, picture books, best sellers, mysteries, science

fiction, and cookbooks. My memory blanks. We sold about $200,000 in books the first year, and had many books stolen, too.

What did I like about working at the bookstore? I liked choosing the titles. When a publisher had a fall list of about one hundred titles, I knew that I was going to be buying only about twenty-one of them, and that I should really be buying only twelve. Then the salesman, mostly being helpful and somewhat being pushy, would try to push fifty of the titles. I had to look at each one and decide whether I had a customer for it. For some the decision was easy and I could say, "That book about traveling through such and such is just right for Mrs. Whatsername. I know that she comes in every week." I had to keep up with my customers and know when they were not due in for several weeks because of cruise vacations and such. I tried to play that game in my head when I did the buying.

I did not read very much myself because of a lack of time. Besides spending time behind the cash register trying to take care of the paperwork, I sometimes worked the night shift in order to avoid paying a few dollars to somebody else to be there. I would get home at about one o'clock in the morning and have to be back at the bookstore at eight o'clock. I didn't have much time to read. There were, though, many books that I wanted to read. I would watch many books being sold, such as *Chesapeake* and books by John McPhee. I would always say that I was going to catch up with that reading when I got away from the store. I wanted to find out why so many people wanted to read those books. With talking books I did go through *Chesapeake* and *Coming into the Country*.

A friend of mine who is a librarian at West Point told me about the talking books. He follows these kinds of developments and when I chat with him he often tells me what is going on in Congress with talking books. When I first brought the talking books home, I thought they were fantastic and incredibly well produced. I liked the narrators. It is fantastic that the books are as excellent technically as they are. I am so grateful they exist because I have had so many problems with my eyes. I have also had problems with my fingers, trying to learn braille. It just does not make any sense to learn it when you can have these cassettes.

I am not sure what I will be doing next. I was thinking of trying to get into the blind vendor program of rehabilitation, but I had a little more eyesight when I was thinking of doing that originally. I guess if I had the right people to work with I might be able to run a bookstore again, but right now I don't know.

Rhea Melov

The people I met recently in China were so kind and generous, I had not one bit of apprehension. One time when we were going through the Forbidden City we had to climb many steps and I cannot walk very well. We had a wheelchair as well as a cane, and my husband Charlie would take me up the steps and then go back down for the wheelchair. While waiting for Charlie at the top of the platform I decided that I would try to walk some, but I found that walking was impossible because of the big traveling bag that I was carrying. A Chinese man came over to me and put out his hand to help me; without one moment's hesitation I gave my bag to him to hold for me. He not only carried my bag but he held my arm most of the way down. When I got down to the bottom I got into the wheelchair, with many Chinese people watching with great interest. There are wheelchairs in China, but they are very limited. Charlie bent down to release the one brake that he usually uses and the fellow who had helped me touched Charlie on the shoulder to tell him that he had put on the second brake and it would have to be released as well. Now can you imagine my purse in the hands of a complete stranger? I had absolute confidence that I did not have to worry about it. Everyone was kind, especially the tour bus drivers, who helped Charlie figure out a simple way to fold up the wheelchair on the bus.

One time we were at the Great Wall, which I could not attempt to climb. Everyone else was climbing except me and the driver, and we were sitting in the bus waiting for the others to return. The driver took out a book and said to me, "How are you?" He was studying English, so we had a whole lesson during our wait. It was really an interesting experience. It is true that when I went to the museums I could not see the quality of the work. I could see certain large things, but my eyes are pretty bad and getting worse. I want to go to Egypt some time, but the terrain there would be too rough for me and I could not take the wheelchair on the sand.

If you go to China you can take a talking book along with you. I took my cassette player because I knew that there would be times when I would be too tired to go out and there would be places that I could not go because of the problems involved in walking.

Charlie and I are what you might call prehistoric hippies. During the Depression we hitchhiked across the country and learned that when times are hard, people are nicer than when times are easy. When times are easy, everybody distrusts everybody else. Charlie and I met in high school, and we have been married for fifty years. We still get along to some extent. That trip to China was something else for him. Anyway, we hitchhiked across the country, north to south, east to west, in 1932 and I remember that we were in Florida when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was shot at. The only thing we did not do was get a ride on a freight car. Charlie wouldn't stand for that, because there were too many bums.

Without the talking books here, my situation would be absolutely unbearable. I do not want to be overly dramatic, but I am so limited as to what I can do. I love gardening, but in order to see what my strawberries are doing, I have to go put on my reading glasses. I cannot stand very long, but I can occasionally prepare a simple lunch. For their contribution to my ability to exist as a person I cannot overstate the importance of the talking books. With them I am able to see something that I can't see. I can visualize the stories.

One day after I had been reading the talking books for a while, I went to the bathroom and I said to Charlie, "Would you bring my book in so that I can finish reading it? I had completely forgotten that it was a cassette tape and required a machine!

I went to a knitting class at the League for the Handicapped last week, and when I came home from it I was terribly depressed. There were a number of people in the class and they were very pleasant. Some of the women had had strokes and some were visually handicapped, but it suddenly dawned on me that I was part of a group that was disabled. I came home and I said to Charlie, "I don't know whether I can go there again." You see, I have to understand that I am part of that group. And I think that what you grow up with you stay with. I have always been very active, wanting to go places. We have many activities now; we go to the symphony rehearsals and to any concerts that we can manage. I am still very much interested in doing things and going places. If we had been sensible we would never have gone to China, but we were both delighted that we did.

Even though I have all these other activities, it would not be enough without the talking books. I need something that will fill in the major

part of my time and give Charlie some time to himself. Right now if I were not talking to you, I would be lying down listening to *Manchu*, thoroughly enjoying it.

Phoebe Kretschmer

I have lived most of my life in San Francisco, but I have worked in Washington, Boston, and Honolulu. Here in San Francisco for the most part I worked for the city. At my last job I was the only woman in the office and I had to make up five payrolls and the budget, which was difficult. That was too much for me, so I retired early!

It was really a funny system in Washington, D.C., back then and I got to know quite a few of the newspaper reporters. Once one of them said to me, "You're looking for another job, aren't you? Why don't you go up there to Senator LaFollette's office, because he is looking for a secretary." LaFollette was the man that I most wanted to work for, since we had been reared on the *Progressive.* They hired me. I was very surprised that Senator LaFollette was short. He was sick often and he was running for president, so I was there to help in the campaign. I went up to Boston for my vacation and while I was there I heard that the senator had died.

I always liked to read. Oh, how I loved to read. My mother was a librarian in a small town and she was the first one to start the decimal system there. She worked in the library when I was in high school, and sometimes when she did not want to go down and open up the library, my sisters and I would go and do it. I always loved the library and I got started there very young, as soon as I could sign my library card. Later, when I was older, I read to the younger children in the family. In fact, I read *Les Miserables* to my brother and sister. And whenever I travel, the library is one of the first places I visit in any city. I always want to see what kind of library a city has. Some of them are absolutely marvelous!

I think one of the best things a mother can do for her children is to read to them. That way they learn how to pay attention, how to concentrate, and that helps them in life. The book of poems that we really loved was by James Whitcomb Riley; that book lost its binding because we read it so much. My mother loved to have her hair

brushed, so she would sit there and as long as one of us would brush her hair she would read to us. That trade-off taught us that you do not get anything in life without paying for it. We read Teddy Roosevelt's book and then there was Richard Haliburton's book about crossing the Himalayas. My father took the best magazines, such as *Literary Digest* and *World's Work.* Everyone in the family was a reader, so we grew up in that kind of an atmosphere.

In 1975 when I was on a trip to the Caribbean, I noticed that each day my vision was getting dimmer. It got so bad that I could not fill out the customs papers when I came back home, so I went to the clinic. They examined my eyes all morning. The doctors kept looking at my eyes and then going in the other room and consulting. Finally they said to me, "There'll be no operation, no medicine, no glasses." They said that I was legally blind. So I thanked them and left. It was a terrible shock, and I could not think about it at the time. So I started home and I thought to myself, "Don't think about it now. Think about it tomorrow." And that has been my policy ever since. All the way home I thought, "I'm going to have a swell dinner tonight. Now what will I have?" I planned my dinner and kept my mind on that. I went home and had a very good dinner. I think that is the best thing to do. I am very grateful that I have peripheral vision. I cannot see right ahead of myself and that is why I can't read.

I started going to the main library and I inquired about where I could find out about those reading books. They said, "Oh, yes. You come in and sign up." I went in and they wrote down information about me. Then I had to wait outside and the girls got me my books. I did not want the books mailed to my house. I thought it was expensive for the government, so I kept coming down to the library to pick them up. I also did not want my books mailed because I did not want the other people in my apartment house to know that I was blind. But then there is a good side to people's knowing; for example, when I was burglarized a few months ago, the burglars could have taken much more than they did. I had my cassette machine there, with my talking books, so they probably saw that I was blind and felt bad about burglarizing me.

I have found that it is not such a terrible experience to go blind. In fact, I have gained more understanding of people because of it. I think that the greatest thing about people who cannot see is their courage and the fact that they never complain. I've been around them more and they enjoy life. My idea is that we should change the way the world looks at people who cannot see. We are not in the dark ages. We should not be called "poor dears." We want to be right out there, doing things. We have a handicap, but many people have handicaps.

We do not dwell on ours, we go out and enjoy ourselves and do as much as we can, even though we have to try five times harder than people who can see.

The day is not long enough to do all the things I want to do—there are so many things. I will say that listening to the talking books and to *Newsweek* uses up a good deal of my time. I have to sit down and listen. I usually do not do anything else while I am listening, just listen.

I belong to senior center and am very active there. I also go out to the subregional library. At one of the meetings there, the librarian asked if any of the people had poems to submit for the cassette magazine. I wrote a little sonnet and took it to the library. I showed it to the librarian and she said, "It's good. Write another." Then I showed it to another librarian there and she said the same things. I would never have written another poem if they had not encouraged me to, but I figured that they are pretty smart and ought to know. I wound up writing a poem for each issue of the magazine. Later the senior center started a poetry class, which I joined. Writing poetry takes a great deal of time, but I love doing it. An idea comes to me at night, and the worst part of it is that if I do not get up and write it down, that idea keeps whirling around in my head. The only thing to do is write it down. Usually the poem comes right out. Of course, afterward I have to work on the meter and rhyme. It is like writing prose, because I try to describe something accurately so the other person will understand it. And I think that that is what poetry is, writing about something so that another person can see the picture that you see. I like writing poetry very much. It is one of my hobbies now.

At the library they understand people who cannot read and treat us as individuals. Each person who has been through this experience has something to contribute to make it easier for others. We do not want to stop growing and progressing because it is such a wonderful world that we live in. If people understood that we really want to be considered individuals, and that all we have is one handicap, things would be better. That one handicap is not the only thing to notice about us, it is just one part of us. The more you forget about it, the better it is. We do not want to be held back or put into a class where it is said, "You're different from everybody else. You can't join in. You can't be in this." We are a part of the universe and all people, if they only knew it, have handicaps. It seems as if our handicap is so big, but it is secondary. There are things that are far more important than not being able to see. The best thing is to forget about our problem as much as possible and to act like a normal person as much as possible. Many people think I can see perfectly, they really do.

Everybody is encouraging. The only time I get upset is when I hear people make rude remarks that they should not make to anybody, blind or sighted. I was coming home late last night after modeling and it was dark. I got on the bus and it was marked "special." I could not see that it was marked "special" and I asked to get off at my stop, a stop that "special" buses do not stop at. A man up front said to me, "What's the matter? Can't you read? This bus is marked 'special'." That remark hurt. Then sometimes in the grocery I ask someone who looks friendly if he can find something for me and he'll sometimes say, "What's the matter, are you blind?" But actually, in grocery stores I have found that the young people are the nicest. I tell them, "I want mushroom soup." I do not care what brand; I do not make a fuss over what brand as long as they get me anything similar to what I want. I find that people in their twenties are very helpful. But I try to do as much as I can myself.

Now at the senior center there are different kinds of people. Some who never talk or ask questions in class, but at least they are there, they are listening. They are interested enough to come to the class. They will never contribute ideas but I think it is important that they attend. If they did not come at all, there would be something to worry about. I have talked to some of the quiet ones and they say, "Oh, I wouldn't miss this for the world. We have some good discussions." That is one of the reasons I think these downtown centers are very good. They have programs that make people think and get excited.

I was at a senior center up north this summer, while I was taking care of my sister, and it was in a beautiful building, all paid for by the government. The people were all well dressed. They sat around politely and never raised their voices, just whispered to each other. I did not like it. I like our center here in the city. We have fights and arguments and some people are asked to leave, but there is life going on here, and we all know one another. Someone says, "Did you know that Jack has pneumonia?" So we write him a get-well card. Up north they're all nice and polite, kind of stereotyped. I like it when people are themselves. But of course they have to behave themselves, they cannot just do anything they like. We have rules in our senior center. You must keep seated at the table and not wander all over the dining room.

I liked the meetings at the library from the very beginning. They were very informal and we heard short histories of the books. I found many good books that way. One on China intrigued me. It was by a Harvard man who had worked in communes, and it was excellent. Right now I am finishing the W. Somerset Maugham biography. What a long book! It takes a long time, but there are many places that you

can chuckle over. He was really very astute; he said some very clever things.

I was not afraid to speak up to the library commission about getting more space for our talking-book library. As a matter of fact, now that I cannot see so well I am less afraid than I was before. For an example, I used to be scared to go where I saw mobs of people screaming and yelling. Now I go to the senior center through one of the toughest parts of town. One day as I was going there, right ahead of me on the corner was a crowd of men yelling with their arms raised. Ordinarily I would have avoided them, but I walked right through there confidently and said, "Excuse me, please," just as if I were in a ritzy part of town. And the fellow who was waving his arms the most said, "All right, girl." That was his way of saying, "Certainly, madam." And a path was made for me. The reason, I think, is that I am not criticizing and not trying to make people over. I think that that is an attitude that it is good to have. I see prostitutes and I feel sorry for them; I am not trying to make them over. I am not condemning them or anybody. When you have that kind of an attitude, you can walk anywhere safely.

Many people are not enlightened about blind people and libraries. I think some librarians are still in the dark ages. They are so involved with the sighted that they have put us in a category of something that is unnecessary. They think that we should be content with going down to the public library and sitting down and waiting for books to be brought to us. They think that the system is okay, but that is archaic, it is not modern. I think many people, if you tell them about it and they stop to think about it, will see that it is only right that we should be able to use a library just as sighted people do. Why shouldn't we have a library where we can go in and find the books ourselves and sit down and listen to the cassettes right there if we want to? We need a library like that, and we need a librarian who can understand our needs and help us, because libraries—and talking books—are really some of our greatest pleasures.

Marie DelNunzio

I'm eighty-seven years old. I went on the road at seventeen with a mind-reading act and we played down through the lower part of California. I met my husband, who was also in show business, and we began touring together. That was my first husband—I was married twice—and we read together when we were on the road. He would read to me and I would read to him. We read all the Zane Grey stories together. On the road there was always a library I could go to, and they all knew who I was. I could read a book a day easily, so I would get the books back to the library on time. I taught my children to read, too, and when we would get onto the train, the whole company would read to my children stories such as *Peter Rabbit.*

When I went to get my driver's license a few years ago, I found that I was developing a cataract and that, according to law, I was legally blind. I guess the thought of being legally blind scared me more than anything else. The books that my daughter read to me helped, and I went for short walks in the neighborhood, but when it began to rain in November I fell into a deep depression. I would not let my daughter know about it, though, and by the time she came home from work every day I was dressed and the house was straightened up. I was getting to a very bad stage, when one of my other daughters said to the daughter who lives with me, "Why don't you get talking books for Mama? You can't be there all the time to read to her." So my grandson and I went down to the library in his truck and we brought home just about a truckload of books. When I got the books I was in a bad depression, trying to pull myself out. My grandson, bless his heart, showed me how to work the cassette machine.

I must have had some very good books in the beginning because they held my attention and really brought me out of my depression. I remember getting a book about people who had phobias and were afraid even to go out of the house. I said to myself, "You're not that bad off." If it had not been for talking books I would have gone crazy.

They brought me out of my depression and I always tell everyone about them. When you get old and get cataracts it's as if half of your world has been shot away.

Part Two
The Librarians

The librarians were asked to talk about their backgrounds, and what made them want to become librarians in the first place. They were then asked about their library school class work and whether it prepared them for their eventually working with the blind and physically handicapped. Discussion followed on the type of training that librarians would suggest for work with the blind and physically handicapped, in other words, what training could they have had to make their jobs easier. The librarians were then asked to enumerate the satisfactions and frustrations they experience in their jobs, and what they would like to see in the future for services for the blind and physically handicapped.

These librarians, with two exceptions, are providing service through the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped network at either the regional (state) or subregional (local) level. Comments on the differences in service at these two levels are made and in cases where a third service possibility, the local public library, was brought up it was pursued.

Deenie Culver
Subregional Librarian
Anniston, Alabama

Note: This interview occurred during the same week that decisions were being made whether to continue funding for this subregional library.

How I came to be involved in libraries is very strange. I did not seek out the library as a place of employment. The library director worked in the community theater with me and when he had an opening at the subregional library he said to me, "I think you have the temperament. I think you have the personality to work with the blind and physically handicapped. Would you come and look things over tomorrow and see if you'd like to work there?" I did and I was ready to go to work right away. The library had been trying to get some city workers to come out and paint the subregional library, since walls had just been put up to partition it off from the closed stack area. I said, "If you'll let me paint it, I'll come to work on Monday." So I painted for a week and whenever I went into the staff lounge the staff would look at me strangely. I had on blue jeans and I had paint on my hair!

The first week, as I was putting paint on the wall, I met my first patron. I fell in love with the service at first sight. We started out with twenty-three patrons and the first month we circulated twenty-six books. Almost twelve years later, we are now serving 675 patrons in six counties.

I do not want to work in any other kind of library. I made that decision and I have had opportunities to do otherwise, but I do not want to. There is something about this service that is not like any other. I feel as if I have raised a child. That is the only analogy that I have ever been able to think of. It is a child, it is growing, and this Friday it may die. If it does not die, there will be some alterations made, I am sure, and not because LSCA money is not available, but because the regional library no longer believes that service to the handicapped at the subregional level is a priority for getting LSCA funds.

I have racked my brain trying to decide what I should do. When you have put so much of your life into something, it would be hard to see it die. How am I going to tell my patrons? I know one thing absolutely, and that is that at the end of the year I will not be serving that big county that is adjacent to us. It is not in our system, so the likely thing to do, according to my administrator, is to send the readers back to the regional library. But the patrons are so close; they are only thirty miles from us. What separates the regional from the subregional libraries is that we give our patrons personalized service. The regional library cannot possibly give personal service to a woman in an apartment building eight blocks up the road who cannot get out, who wants large-print books and cassettes, and who *wants to see her librarian!* At the regional level they do not care about John Doe; he is just a name, not a person. They have no feeling for these people because they see so few patrons.

The patrons were my family before I got married. I know their children, I have eaten in their homes, and I have taken them to the doctor or to go shopping. They are just like a part of my family. The people at the regional level do not know what that can mean, because they do not allow themselves to get that close, or they cannot get that close because they are so far removed from most patrons. To the few people who do know about our troubles, I say that I am going to fight for my patrons. I want to give this service. I do not want to be a deposit collection of books. I am more than a deposit collection of books. We have young people that we have helped through college who never would have made it without our volunteer readers.

The suggestion is that we should be a deposit collection only and that we should close up and let the regional library provide service to our readers, gratis. They would be paying for serving our readers. But they cannot provide the service that I provide. I am not bragging. I am just saying that it is impossible for them to do it from one hundred miles away. The regional library is in a beautiful building and that is all. A beautiful warehouse cannot substitute for personal service. Nobody on that staff has the ability to give the kind of service and the kind of hours that I give. This issue of funding the last three or four weeks has made me very angry. We are not a priority anymore, we are at the very bottom. I think we are just above "other," whatever that is. The disadvantaged, migrant workers, and all other groups are way ahead of us.

I am not the type of person who blows up. I keep many of my feelings inside. And I am not a person who would yell at a patron who came in here or really complain if a button comes off a machine. When

I first looked over the library I thought, "I don't know anything about blind people." Then I started to think, "Do I know any?" I knew the man at the post office who has a concession, I knew my cousin, and that was it. I did not know many blind and physically handicapped people so I did not know whether this library would work. I spent one whole day at the regional library and they gave me my reader cards and folders, gave me a tour, and told me what I was supposed to do. I came back here and quickly discarded everything that I didn't like. I think that is what you have to do with the regional library—just go by the rules and then do your own thing.

We have always delivered things personally to people who cannot get out, if they are totally blind and do not know how to use the machine. I am not going to mail it to them, I'm going to take it out to them to show them how to use it. That is only fair. Unless they are far back in the woods or in a place that I do not know how to get to, I am going to go to them without fail so that they will know how. And I think that the first beginning personal touch will keep them in contact with us, and they will call us if they are having problems. One day, on the phone long distance, I taught a woman how to get a needle out of a machine and how to get it back in. It took twenty minutes but she finally figured it out. She was thirty-five miles away and if the telephone conversation had not worked, I would have gotten in the car and gone to take the needle out for her. Today that is not very economical, I'm sure. I would have to have several other visits to make to justify the trip.

People who love their jobs and want to do their jobs, and want to continue to do their jobs, are the ones who get threatened. I don't know wheher I am going to make it all the way through that meeting Friday. If they start taking the subregional library away, I think that I will get up and leave.

I don't know how you would teach somebody to provide this service. I think they have almost got to be born with the skill. In the library courses that I had there was nothing that even remotely relates to what I am doing. Students from Jacksonville State University who are doing their practicum in public libraries come to our library. Every one of them that I have had over the eleven years is so amazed: "I didn't learn any of this in school!" You will not learn it, they have no course on it, they will not teach it. They will not teach you how to serve blind and physically handicapped patrons. So while the students are in my department, they get a taste of what it is to serve these people. They do more than shelving books and checking tapes.

I think you have to emphasize most that this is a personal service.

The librarian and the patron have to have a rapport with each other. To serve the patrons to the maximum, you have to know their likes and dislikes, their family situations. You have to know so much about them to serve them in the right way, and I think that you have to have that personal touch, rapport between the two of you, because if you do not, the people end up getting books they don't want, or they don't understand something about the machine so they never use it. Printed instructions or instructions on tape are a voice in the dark, not a person that the patron can touch. The telephone is fine for talking with someone, but when you finally meet someone whom you have been talking to on the phone for a long time, or for whom you have handled records a thousand times, it's just like coming home. No other service can do that. I have made up my mind that no other service can do that. I got into this not knowing what I was getting into, but now I need the patrons as much as they need me. I will *not* let go! There is no other service that comes close.

Donna Dziedzic
Regional Librarian
Chicago, Illinois

For many reasons I think it is about time that library service for the blind and physically handicapped stopped being a "special" service. I think that the fact that it is called a special service provided with special funding, for a special community, with special materials is becoming the greatest barrier to persons who are blind and physically handicapped having the full range of library services that they should have. I think that there are a number of things that happen, one of which is that the librarians who serve this public can sometimes get a bit territorial: "They're my patrons and I will serve them." They try to provide everything that they can, which is not bad library service, but there is no way, given the resources, that they can provide full library service.

And on the other side of it, I think librarians who are not responsible for talking-book service think there is this nice package that they can send blind and physically handicapped persons to. It is a simple thing, and if a blind person walks into a public library the person serving him is likely to say, "Oh, we have this whole service over there for you." They do not think to ask, "Would your child want to come to a story hour? Would you like to borrow a record?" They don't ask him what he wants. I think, too, that calling this a special service also poses a barrier for the patron who feels that this is the only service that he is eligible for or has a right to. The patron gets turned away so many times or is not referred at any time to traditional public library services that he is unaware of. He becomes discouraged or doesn't know what he is missing.

There are two other big problems, one of which is psychological. Because everybody keeps calling this special, because it is drummed into everybody's head that this is special, everybody thinks that he has to *do* something special when he meets a handicapped person. You have the example of a children's librarian who has been giving story hours for years, and she has handled every kind of child who has come

to her for story hour and handled each well: the little brat, the kid that's withdrawn, the whole gamut of kids. And then one day a child in a wheelchair comes in and instead of using the techniques that she had learned to use with any child—the methods of basic reference interview, the elimination you use with any public to find out what it is that they really need or want—the librarian very often tends to think "This is a special child and I don't know anything special to do." So she tends not to do anything, because it does not occur to her that techniques she has used for 497 years, that have worked really well for other children, might well work for this child.

The other thing that is really bad, particularly these days, is that there is a big concept, philosophically, of going back to basics for library service. And I think that along with that philosophical concept there is the economic reality, which is also back to basics. And if you go along for years being considered special, receiving special funding, not being integrated into the whole budget, you are going to be one of the first ones to be lopped off: "We can serve the majority of our community, but this service over here has always cost us extra money. Besides, it's special and it only services X percentage of the public." I think that's really a problem. Plus it becomes even worse, in that, by splitting up the public that way, we also split up our grass-roots support for requesting additional funding for the library in general.

So we end up with one group of lobbyists running in and saying, "You've got to support library systems; you've got to support public libraries," and then we have another group coming in to the same legislators saying, "You've got to support library services to the blind and physically handicapped." It would be better if we could all go in with one voice and say, "Look at the variety of people who use library service, who benefit from library service. You've got to support us because we're providing your constituency with some real service." Now it ends up being a little scatter-shot.

So I think that the time for being special is passing. At one point it was very important for librarians serving the blind and physically handicapped to be advocates, almost the bra burners of library service, saying, "Look at this public. We haven't served them for all these years. They've got special needs. Look at all the things that we can do for them." I think that that approach was good at one point and I think it served its purpose. I think we can stop this kind of advocacy right now and begin to be integrated into the mainstream of general public library communities.

The general library law in this state and the philosophy of the Illinois State Library has always been that the public libraries and the

library systems are responsible for service to all members of the community, which includes handicapped persons. That philosophy in this state makes our job easier to a certain extent. We can always say things like, "I know you do not think you're responsible for serving handicapped people, but honey, let me show you. See this law over here? You are." One of the things that is apparently very good about the Illinois system is that it gets so localized. It gets down to the subregional level, which is responsible for a very specific area, and in some instances it gets down to the local public library level, with considerable guidance. The quality of service varies greatly from community to community. There will be a community where you have a professional librarian who is dedicated full-time to provision of this service, and that will usually be in the larger, wealthier communities. And in the smaller, less wealthy communities you may have a clerk-level position or an associate-level position, where this service is only part of the person's other duties. So the level of service and the amount of time dedicated to it really can vary from level to level, from community to community. On the one hand, from the point of view of individuals being served, you want to say, "These people are not getting the same quality of service throughout the state." On the other hand, you can say that blind and handicapped persons are getting no better or no worse service than any other people in their area. I guess that somewhere you have to strike a happy medium.

I don't know how full integration happens. I think it's something that those of us who are in this service ought to be working on, not only with the public we serve, but also with the members of the general public and other librarians. We need to keep getting across the concept that neither these people nor this service is weird. We should be saying to the librarians, "You have tons of stuff that you can offer these people." And we should be saying to the patrons, "You have much that you can request from these people." And I think that some patterns will be probably developed at various local levels to reflect this. I know that we sit here and we think of numerous things that we can do to promote this. After a while we run out of traditional things to do, but after a while we also see that some of the traditional things we've been doing are working. For example, when I go to a party and people ask me what I do, I say, "I work for the library for the blind and physically handicapped." And instead of saying, "What?" they say, "Oh, yes, my cousin uses that service." Or they say, "You are in the building out on Roosevelt Road. I've always wondered what goes on there." I realize that I am making some kind of headway with the public. It's one of those things, like many things, that is going to take

its course and is going to take its time, and it is not telling me what its course or its time is. I think sometimes when you work in it you can't see it.

What seems to be the pattern in the development of nontraditional public library services is that they are very reactive. They develop because of a very obvious and stated need in the community. Often libraries don't change until society tells them they have to, and that is why it's hard to predict what it is we ought to be doing. I don't want to call it a fault with the profession, I want to call it a reality. Sometimes it will be a fault and sometimes it will not. There was an article somewhere that really discussed the big social service library programs which developed in the 1960s. What happened was that for the first time in years, librarians and libraries jumped on the bandwagon saying, "We're going to serve these people because we know that they're there." And they developed programs that were not well thought through and that were definitely not supported for any length of time, programs that reflected much enthusiasm and not much thought. All those programs sort of dropped dead. They just occurred as immediate reactions to immediate social needs. I do not know if that makes waiting a week or two to develop something a fault. It may make it an asset.

I often think that many libraries tend to forget about staff, aside from putting them in the budget for a special program and indicating the qualities they must have or the background they must have. And really, when you get right down to it, I think that whatever kind of library you have, if you have a good staff, there is almost nothing you cannot do. With a good staff there is almost no segment of the population that you cannot in some way serve or make welcome. And I think that if you walk into some public libraries, it doesn't make any difference how intelligent, how rich, how pleasant, and how physically sound you are; if the staff is cold and doesn't give a flying hoot, you're not going to get good library service, no matter how many resources are there. And yet you go into some other libraries and the staff not only is aware of the tools and the resources but has the kind of people-training that makes them say, "Okay, this person has these realities about him, whatever they are. He speaks English, he doesn't speak English, he's deaf, he's in a wheelchair, he's ten years old, he's eighty years old. This person has these things about him that are very real and with what I know I think I can provide him with what he wants."

I think that at the library school there should be some training not only in Bureaucracy 101, but also in individual interpersonal assessment. Even today I hear of friends who are told by people with whom

they work, "You don't interact with people really well. Maybe you ought to change careers. You can be a librarian and work with books." These poor souls get into library school. They have poor social skills and nobody says to them, "What are you doing here? What kind of job do you really want? Has it ever occurred to you that when you become a professional librarian, which is what you're supposedly here for, you may have to talk to somebody? You may have to communicate with somebody, whether it is a patron across a desk, a county commission for your money, your staff, or your boss. You are going to have to get some idea of something across to someone with whom you're working." Once these poor souls graduate somebody hires them. I do not know why, but people do hire them, maybe because they won't rock the boat, they will not do anything terrible. But they do get hired and once they get there they stay there, and they will not change.

When I applied for library schools, being unsophisticated, I asked each of the schools if I could come for an interview, and being persistent, I did go for the interviews, which I found extraordinarily enlightening. The people who were responsible for the library schools never thought to interview the students. It was just, "Oh, you fit the criteria so you can come." And there is so much that is important to being a librarian that is not in those criteria. The criteria are not at this point based on scope of human interaction, but are based on academic considerations.

With respect to the importance of staff and training in library school and realities, I remember when I was standing down on the first floor of this building shortly after it was opened with a huge camera crew from one of the local television stations. One of the really suave interviewers was interviewing me. It was a wonderful morning. I was getting ready to make my third live television appearance and I was so excited, the great star of stage and screen! And unfortunately it happened to be the morning when one of our staff members went crazy. In the middle of this whole thing we had two policemen carrying a screeching staff member out the building. I was sitting there thinking, "This is real life. This is what happens. Here you are telling the world how wonderful it is here, and a woman is being carried out screaming. My mother didn't even prepare me for this!"

That same kind of thing happens when you hit the reality of being a library manager or a supervisor. I feel very fortunate. The regional library here has three professional librarians in addition to myself and they are uniformly good librarians, dedicated workers. While they emphasize producing results, they are also people-oriented and in this case specifically oriented toward other staff. You have a variety of

people that you work with and try to train, and try to fire or encourage to leave if they're not up to your standards. Some of them you can get rid of, some of them you can't. And some are borderline, so if you completely weeded out your staff on a certain basis, such as coming in late, you might lose your entire shipping department, which would leave you with the problem of 5,000 books a day to get out of the building and no one to do it. You really have to do all this weighing and it's never, ever going to be perfect.

I do not think that Chicago is the only city in the world whose clerical staff perhaps is not thoroughly committed to the concept of library service for all Americans. I am taking an executive development course with the city of Chicago. One of the things that bothers many of us in city government, of course, is trying to motivate staff. The stark reality, according to the experts who spoke with us, is that you cannot motivate staff. You cannot motivate someone who chooses not to be motivated. What do you do? Do you accept the reality of the situation, which is that you cannot motivate people? Or do you say, "Maybe I can get through to one or two, or some glimmer will come through"? I'm probably going to opt for the latter, just because I'm perverse.

If I were offered another management position that I felt I could do, I would go to it tomorrow. My first commitment is to library services, and right now the library service to which I'm committed is services for the blind and physically handicapped. I don't have an overwhelming concern for this service as opposed to any other service. And I think that very large portions of management require that you be at best objective and at worst a bit cold and nasty. When someone in this position had a great emotional commitment to it, the service suffered tremendously. It just happens that in this atmosphere, that is not the best approach. I think that if in some way you are at least somewhat emotionally distanced from your community, you can work on such things as managing the place to make sure that service improves and planning for the future.

Julie Marquez Kindrick

At time of interview, Subregional Librarian
Fresno, California

Currently Principal Librarian for Community Libraries
Fresno County

Sometimes when handicapped patrons or their families come in here for the first time they are hesitant, but I go up to them and say, "I'm Julie Kindrick and I'm glad you're here. Are you bringing back some books today?" I try to find out if this is their first visit and if it is I say, "Would you like to see the library?" I try to encourage them by telling them about the best sellers, and if they are with a family I ask the family if they would like to listen to a book to see what it's like. That way I can get the family involved, because that is very important. If the person is in a situation where other family members will be in the living room listening to the radio or watching television I say, "You know, we have earphones so that you can read your book in the living room with your family if you want to." First-time patrons are just delighted with the library and they say, "I never knew there were so many talking books!" Then I explain how our system is set up, how we can go to the shelves and read the titles to them if they want us to, how if they are interested in something special we have the microfiche catalogue and how we can look up books for them by their favorite author. Then I usually ask the patron, "What have you been doing lately?" And some of them have traveled. We have one patron who travels to Iowa often because she has family there. I said to her, "We have the bicentennial series of books on Iowa. Would you like to look at them?" And she said, "Oh, yes!" Involvement with these patrons is important, and we take the time to become involved.

I began to work in a library because I could type, and that was the only job that was open to me. I was working under a special program and I made a grand total of seven dollars a month back then. I remember that I was really intrigued by the library when it was in the basement of the old courthouse; then we had an earthquake and the library had to move to a circus tent, which increased my interest even more. I worked in the catalogue department there and I always say, "May all the cataloguers live forever because I never want to be one." Then I

got married and my youngest child was kindergarten age when I went back to work at a branch library in Kern County. Through a librarian there I became interested in professional library work, and she encouraged me to go back to school. It took anumber of years for me to go through junior college, as I was raising a family and working. When I graduated in 1960 my son asked me if it had taken twenty years for me to get through college, since it had been twenty years for me between high school and graduating from college.

Then I met my current husband, Bill, who was very eager to go back to school. We decided that getting more education would be our joint goal, while my personal goal was librarianship. I liked the librarians that I had worked with. I liked the atmosphere of the library and I was really fortunate to work in a branch library where the librarian in charge was also my friend. Her philosophy was, "A good librarian can do anything." If the janitor was not there we would clean up. If the displays had to be made and we had no one to do them, we did them. She also encouraged me to learn the reference books and showed me that she had confidence in my ability to be in charge of a library. Her confidence made me want to be more involved in giving service and encouraged me to become a professional librarian.

When I went back to library school, service to the blind and handicapped was the farthest thing from my mind. I had talked to our administrator before I went to library school in 1970, and she encouraged me to do my thesis on service to shut-ins, but that's the nearest I came. At that time I wanted to give service to the Spanish-speaking community in Fresno. When I graduated from library school, our library had received federal funds to set up a service to shut-ins. I was asked to develop the service. My involvement in talking books came from that project.

When, as part of my outreach duties, I was setting up a library program for senior citizens, I went to a local church to visit some of them. There I met my first talking-book patron, who had heard that I was coming and had a problem with his talking books that he wanted me to take care of. When he approached, I knew he was blind even though at that point I had had very little contact with blind people. He said, "I've been getting talking books for more than twelve years now and recently they haven't sent me any." His name was Tony Correal, and he is now deceased. I said to him, "Mr. Correal, don't worry about it. I'll go back to the library and make the call for you." So when I went back I called the regional librarian and told her I had just met Tony. Then I said, very professionally, "Is there any reason why he is not receiving his books?" She checked his file and told me that

some books were on the way. Then I said to the librarian, "When may he expect to receive the books?" having no idea what this program was all about. Then I called Tony only to find that he had fourteen books which had just arrived from the regional library stacked on his doorstep. That was my introduction to this service.

Through Tony, people heard about me and started calling me for help with their talking books, so I decided it was time I made a visit to Sacramento to see what this service was all about. Also at this time the Friendship Center for the Blind was opening, and they managed to get a small deposit collection of talking books which they asked me to take care of. Eventually some blind people, including Tony, came to me and asked why the Fresno public library did not have any talking books. Because I thought it was an excellent idea to have some, we set up a deposit collection of one hundred books and two machines. I promoted this service when I went out to visit the homebound and found that some of them could no longer see and needed the talking books. This went on for about a year. I took machines out to people's homes and talked to them about the advantages of talking books. I really believed in the service and what it could do for these people, especially since so many of them lived alone and were isolated.

More and more I found myself talking to people about talking books and I wanted to become more involved in the program. I had heard that there were subregional libraries and thought that we should become one, so I made a trip to the regional library and found out the details on my own. Then I came back and talked to our administrator, who knew nothing about it. I made an appointment with her and went over all that I had done. Then I blurted out, "I think that we should become a subregional library." She agreed with me. We signed the contract and then we had 436 patrons transferred to us.

I had little information about this service in the beginning, but I searched out the information because I was interested in it. Somebody else might have done the same thing. I don't know. Right now I believe that if I leave tomorrow, someone else will carry out this service. Another interested person will do it. I want to believe that we would have become a subregional library whether I had been here or not. I have really enjoyed this work, and it makes me feel good to think of all that I did to get the service where it is today. It was an outgrowth of a need in the community. Maybe it was because I went out into the community and saw these people who were forcing themselves to read, one word at a time, that my interest developed. And, of course, Tony helped me, too. He was one of my supporters, and when we had our grand opening, in our nine hundred square feet of space in

the central building, he was as happy as I was, if not happier. It was like a shot in the arm to have people so appreciative of what I did. It grew after that by word of mouth until we picked up three more counties in our service area.

In library school there was no mention of serving this particular public, ever. I did not know about the field, and the regional service had been around for many, many years. I believe that there should be some course in library school in which people like me could tell about our experiences in the real world—what really happens with this service, not some glamorous picture. I would tell the students in library school that the blind and disabled are entitled to the same standard of service as the general public, if not superior service.

One of the things that sticks in my mind is something that one man who was living alone said to me. He said, "Listening to the talking books is like having another voice in the house. I don't feel as if I'm alone." It's companionship. It's also independent; our patrons don't have to have somebody there to read to them, and I hear this point mentioned quite often.

What I like best about the job is the number of people who come in to use the library. Sometimes we get five families in one week, and I think that's just great. I just beam when they come in, I really do. I think that when you can get handicapped people to come to a library, their own library, the program is successful.

Some of the other staff here call me a special services librarian or a librarian for the blind and disabled. Their attitude tends to set me apart, and that is how other librarians in the central building perceive me, too. Here I am giving a library service that all libraries should be giving and they see me as doing something different, which I'm not. The only difference between my service and their service is that mine is not in a print format. I would like to see this attitude change, and I think that over the years, as more articles appear on the subject, people are getting more sensitive. But it will be a long time before we see a really direct, social change.

I believe that a library that serves a community this large should have its own recording booths and volunteers to come in and record. Patrons could come in and say, "I saw this article in the paper and I want it recorded." I hope that that happens.

I hope that we will have more and more people coming in to use the library and that we will have special programs for them in the library. But until some librarians' attitudes change, our patrons' full use of the public library is a long way off. Patrons who are handicapped should be able to walk into their branch library and use the facilities there. In

fact a branch library could have a "wet carrell" where patrons could sit and listen to a book just as other people read in a branch library. But for this to happen there has to be a social change. Maybe if the subject were discussed more in library schools, more library students would be aware of the potential of this service before they graduate. And then when they go to take their oral examinations and they are asked, "What would you do in the library? What changes would you make?" they could say something about the handicapped. Library schools can plant the seed and let it grow from there. All these librarians should have general library backgrounds, though, so that we can provide all the needed services. I would like to have all the new librarians coming into the system in Fresno work for a year in handicapped services for self-development, before they go on to work somewhere else.

I was born in the San Joaquin Valley and both my parents were of Spanish descent, so I say that I'm a Spanish woman. I grew up with a mother who helped out the social workers in our area. She did not have a formal education; in fact, she had only finished the eighth grade, but she was always interested in what was happening to people who could not help themselves. I think she was happiest when the social workers would ask her to interpret for the Mexican families. I grew up with this background, and when you live and learn in this world, you realize that there are other people to be concerned about besides yourself. That's how my background led me to want to provide this service. I think people who go into this type of library work need to like people.

It was very helpful when I started working in this field to get involved in the community I served, as when Tony first approached me about his problem getting books. I went a little further to find out what was really happening. Then he put me in touch with the Friendship Center for the Blind and I became aware of the older Americans organizations through my service for shut-ins. I was going out into the community for the shut-in service, getting to know community leaders and asking, "Where are these people who need our services?" I went to any programs that had to do with senior citizens; at the same time, I kept saying to myself, "There are blind people, too, people who can't read." If I worked more than forty hours every week, it was because there were so many meetings to go to and so many people to get in touch with. Wherever you go, there are blind and disabled people. They don't all stay at home. One lady said to me, after I had told her that our book circulation had gone down a little one month, "Oh, do those people have anything to do besides read?" I said, "They certainly

do." Our patrons are involved in community organizations just like anyone else.

When I first started the service here, we had nine hundred square feet and around three thousand books. We were surrounded by books, and everywhere you looked you saw orange talking-book containers. I wrote a proposal to get money for a reading room, which I envisioned at the central library, but there really was no room there. Then I heard indirectly that there was room in the library basement, and I became really upset about that suggestion. It was thought that other locations would be a waste of space for us, because so many of our patrons could not see. I said, "I am not going to go down in the basement. If we go to the basement I will be unhappy, my assistant will be unhappy, the volunteers will be unhappy, the blind and disabled people are going to be unhappy, and we are not going to succeed." So, we found a library building on the west side of town. I had been around the community long enough to know people's perceptions of the west side, but we decided that if we had something to offer them, the people would come anyway, and that was our motto for a few years. We had a grand opening there and about two hundred people from our four counties came. But people really did hesitate about coming there to use the library, and after one of our staff members was robbed there I knew that we had to move.

We were fortunate to have a member of the local chapter of the NFB who was really behind our move and got his chapter to send a resolution concerning the move to our administrator. This man also got in touch with a member of the board of supervisors and we formed a committee to go out and look at different sites. Everybody was involved and we all worked well together. I decided that it would be best to let the handicapped people choose a site that they felt comfortable with. We found this location, in a city-owned complex of buildings. We now have 1,800 square feet of space, adequate room for our volunteers, a section for a reading room, and a little area for our work space.

We are now serving nine hundred patrons and we circulate about two hundred books each day. When we started back in 1975 we would get very excited if we circulated fifty books a day. We even bragged to everybody about those fifty books. Now we average two hundred books in and two hundred books out each day, which is quite a few books considering the staff we have.

I want the staff here to enjoy themselves. When they are new to this department, besides giving them a tour of the library, we talk about

service on the national level and on the local level; we talk about the importance of what we're doing here. This is why we are so successful with staff. Every job we do here, such as packing the machines and cleaning them before we pack them, is explained to the staff in terms of what it means to the patrons.

Definitely there should be more subregional libraries. I have had librarians from other counties come to discuss starting up subregional libraries. After I finished talking with one person who came in recently, I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted from trying to persuade her to provide this service. She thanked me for the "seminar." There is no reason why there should not be more subregional libraries. I think this is one of the regional librarian's responsibilities—to go out and talk about subregional libraries and to persuade other librarians to set them up. This is also the responsibility of the administrators of public libraries; they should know that the disabled community needs the same service as the nondisabled community, and that means more subregional libraries. I would not mind going out and talking to librarians about this. I am sure I could convince them.

Susan Murrell
Subregional Librarian
Louisville, Kentucky

When we first opened this subregional library, we had people coming in here who had never been in a public library before. They had never browsed through a collection before and even though they were only reading the braille titles on the outside of record and cassette containers, it was still really amazing. These people went wild: "Oh, I forgot about this one. Come look at this book!"

I decided I was going to go into librarianship when I was fourteen years old. I used libraries all the time and lived most of my life in the library. When I was still in library school, I toured the public library here in Louisville. I was very fortunate that when a children's librarian position came open they held it for me. For two years I did children's work, and it was really fun. I really enjoyed the work, but after two years it becomes difficult to do story hours for one hundred children a week. Then the library decided to open a subregional library and had to decide where to locate the new library. Was the subregional library going to go with the bureau for the blind, with the school for the blind, or with the public library? In five blocks in Louisville we have the rehabilitation center for the blind, the American Printinghouse for the Blind, the school for the blind, and a chapter of Recording for the Blind. I was left out of all those discussions. My supervisor participated and did all the planning of floor space and the physical set-up of the room. So when I applied for the position, the department was basically already here.

We are located in an old Carnegie-style building, in the main library—not in a branch somewhere or out in the boonies. We are on the second floor, but we are completely accessible because the library built an addition and people can get to us through the ramps of the new building. We are really close to a main bus route, also. Patrons can spend the whole afternoon pulling their own books from the shelves. Most of them, though, prefer that we select their books even when they come in, or that we at least suggest titles to them. At first

we had many patrons come in just for the novelty of it; right now we have about thirty-five visits a month. In many cases, though, when a patron is out of books, he will send his wife to pick up some; or when his cassette player breaks, he will send somebody to pick up a new one. We probably have three or four such calls for service a day.

I have one patron who comes in once a month, and for me he typifies what this entire service is all about. He comes in with his family, and he is visually impaired while his wife and three children are all sighted. They drop the children off at the children's department for the story hours, his wife goes over to the print collection, and he stays here and selects his own books. This is just his basic visit to the library, and he will be looking for a particular book or more books by a certain author or on a certain subject. He is an example of somebody who really enjoys the experience of coming in. It makes so much sense, you know, having our department in a public library so that everybody can take advantage of it. After this family leaves our department, they usually go back to the reference section or the music section and check out phonograph records. Everything is handled in one building and it is just one handy trip for them.

We have many people who walk through our department just to see what it looks like, and that is when we do our basic educating of the public. I have found that the public still has a very large misconception of what the talking-book program really is, because I still have people come in who think that talking books are Helen Keller and braille. The only reason we keep any braille at all is for the people who walk in and want to see what braille looks like. We can say, "This is what *Boy's Life* looks like in braille." This works especially well when you have a young boy who knows what his *Boy's Life* looks like in print. He can relate to it. We always send the children out with a braille bookmark and one of our brochures, saying, "If you know anybody, just tell them about it." Some people are referred to us this way.

When we first started, we had a very nice financial situation, which is no longer the case; but during that first few years, we were able to conduct some very valuable special programs. For instance, in response to many patron requests we began to record articles from local newspapers and to distribute them to patrons. They were so used to reading the newspaper every day, but this was one thing that they still did not have available to them. We started out doing the newspaper recording twice a week and tried to take one article from each section of the paper that had not had heavy radio or television coverage. We tried to stick to local feature writers with anecdotal items and local politics, especially around election time, plus editorials and letters to the edi-

tor. The people really loved it, especially those who were living by themselves and had no one to read the newspaper to them. I have one patron whose husband would read the newspaper to himself and laugh. He would chuckle over this and that and then she would ask him, "What are you laughing about?" "Oh, nothing," was his response. We also got a good response from the people who were living with our patrons, thanking us for saving their voices. They had a pretty good idea of what we were going to be recording so they knew that they had to read only the sports or certain columns out loud; then they could all discuss the other articles after our patrons had listened to them on cassette. It gave the patrons something to talk about and it really eased the sense of isolation. The national news does much to keep people informed, but at the local level—what the former mayor is doing and thinks like that—some of our patrons did not know much of what was going on. Maybe they had heard a little about local news, but now they had the full details. We also recorded two local magazines for our patrons.

Right now, due to our staffing curtailment, we record on sixty-minute tapes instead of on ninety-minute tapes and the recording is done by local volunteer readers. We also do the television listings now, as we found that all our patrons want to know what is going to be on television. They don't know when the football game is going to be on, or what the movie of the week is, and unless they call every television station or have somebody read the information to them, they are not going to know. I have one patron, also, whose friend would only read her the public station listings and would not tell her about "all that trashy stuff." And the "trashy stuff" was what our patron wanted to watch. Now we send out about 1,300 copies of newspapers and magazines a month, and have about four hundred subscribers.

Our finances have put us in an awkward position now. When our service was first set up, it was under a former state librarian and a former public library director. They had a gentleman's agreement that the public library would provide the space and have all decisions about hiring and firing and making policy, while the state would provide the financial support. We started out, over five years ago, with $55,000 a year. Since that time we have had a new public library director and two new state librarians, but our funding has not changed. There has been no funding cut, but the money doesn't buy today what it did five years ago. The state library has changed personnel frequently and we now have a state librarian who is very responsible and cooperative, which we appreciate, but still it is too late. It is a tenuous situation and that is my problem right now. A few months ago, when there was a

hiring freeze, two part-time people resigned. Now everybody has to share all the jobs here, and each person has to do more work. We have no choice. So we think, "What is the most important thing for me to do today?" I have a stack of *Library Journals* on my desk that you wouldn't believe. I never have the time to read them, because I am too busy sending out books.

I do make sure that whenever we get a donation the donor receives a letter from the library director's office and I personally call and thank him. I just make sure that every donor knows that the donation is appreciated. This year we were pretty lucky; we had about $800 in donations. Before that, four people had remembered the subregional library in their wills, so we do have some backup funding. If things get really desperate and a piece of equipment really needs to be fixed, we can rely on the donation money. If our Visualtek goes out or if our cassette duplicator breaks down, just think of the money needed to repair either of them. We're not talking about fifty dollars to repair a typewriter, we're talking about more on the order of a $2,000 repair bill.

We use volunteers to help us check our books to patrons because our main priority is to make sure that our patrons get books. I used to have many CETA workers here; in addition, over the past four years I have had more than five thousand hours from workers in a special juvenile delinquent program. Those programs have been cut and we have had to find volunteers to pick up the slack. We service more than 1,300 active readers here, and someone on the staff will call the new patrons to explain the service to them once they have registered. We also call them again six weeks later to make sure that the machine is operating and that they understand the system. I have found that the first six weeks are crucial in determining whether they are going to like the service. If they don't like it in those first six weeks, you can pretty much hang it up. So we call our patrons after that time, to see if they have found the plug, and if we know that somebody has not had books in a long time, we call to find out if something is wrong.

Some people in town for various reasons did not want to have a subregional library here, and it took them a while to get used to our service. It really depends on the patron. Some would just as soon have us in Timbuktu where they can call us to send them out their four mysteries a week. But most seem to realize that we can be more responsive to their needs here and that we try to cooperate with other agencies in town to do that. Frequently we refer people to the rehabilitation center, the independent living center, and other sources

of service in town. I think that ultimately it just took them a while to get used to subregional service. They weren't sure what we were going to do. They didn't know what to expect and were fearful.

One of the things that I really enjoy is the freedom involved in this program. We have had many types of programs that I might not have provided if I had been somewhere else. I really enjoy working with our patrons, too. I think it is much more rewarding than working in a public library, where the patrons just throw the books across the desk at you and scream about their fines. When you work in a public library, you really do get to know many regular library users but I have the same thing happen with patrons who come in here or who call me frequently. You develop a feel for the people. There is more opportunity in this type of service for programming and for public speaking. I really do enjoy getting out in public, meeting people, and telling them about our service. You don't get a chance to do those things much in a public library.

Library school didn't prepare me for working in a bureaucracy where it takes you a long time to figure out what rules people are playing by. I found out that sometimes you get funds not because you need them, but because you know somebody. It takes a while to realize that you have to develop your contacts. When I first started here and submitted proposals for funding, I thought, "Surely, they'll give me more money. They'll look at my circulation figures and realize that we have increased circulation and patronage so much." That's not the case. I don't know how much we could have been told about this subject in library school, since the bureaucracy and political structure vary in each state, but some knowledge about working with politicians, trustees, and advisory committees surely would have been helpful.

Another area that I don't think library school prepared me for was hiring and firing. We are administrative staff and we have supervisory duties. Another helpful subject for library school would have been how to deal with patrons. I first took into the program a stereotype of the "wonderful handicapped person." But I have patrons who pawn their talking-book machines; I get my call from the pawn shop each Monday. I had unrealistic expectations when I entered the program. We don't babysit or lead anybody around by the hand. Patrons have just as much responsibility for getting good service as we do for giving it. We emphasize to our patrons: "We cannot always call you. It's your responsibility to call us when you need books. We can't guess. You have to call and let us know." Some people want a special service that we cannot provide, and we don't mind saying to them, "This is what we

can provide and this is what we can't." Most of them are understanding about what we can't provide for them—for example, racing results from the track.

Ten years from now we are going to have to get funding from somebody. Unless we get funding, we are not going to be able to have the staff to check out books. We can do the best that we can and we have recruited some wonderful volunteers, but volunteers do not take the place of full-time staff. There has to be more public money, and not CETA money or grant money, just definite, concrete funding so that we know what we can plan on. The way the economy is going, I think that the next three years are going to be critical for all programs for the blind and physically handicapped. In ten years, I hope, we will have adequate funding so that we can really go out and publicize this service. I did that for a while, but now I don't go out unless I get called. It is just a fact of life. I look at the 1,300 people that need to be served right now, and I would rather provide them with quality service than add another five hundred people and have really pitiful service for all of them. Unless you can be responsive and provide them with books when they call you, why bother?

We had a sculpture workshop here in the library that was really wild. A city agency provided us with a local sculptor for six weeks to teach the patrons how to sculpt, right in the library, and we had our band-aids all ready. He brought the knives and all the equipment and the city paid him for six weeks; then he continued with some of the patrons on his own time. He really got involved; it was fascinating to see a person sculpt who had never used a knife that way before. Many patrons attended that activity who would never have come to the library otherwise. We have two patrons who have continued as private students with the teacher and they are going to have their own show. We take a lot of pride in their accomplishments.

We had a talking-book discussion club. Everyone listened to the same cassette book and then they came to the library to discuss it. We averaged ten to twelve people, depending on the transportation, twice a month. Each meeting was on a different topic, such as historical fiction, science fiction, or biography. That was fun and it opened up worlds to our patrons who had never read books outside certain categories. We had something to please everybody who was there, and then I would pull other books to recommend at the end of the meeting. That was a really worthwhile experience. One of the participants was a woman in her late fifties, and this was the first time she had ever been in a library of any kind. She had lost her sight when she was young, and the teachers had come to the house to teach her. She had never

been in a school library or a public library before, and here she was!

The other thing that I thought was really worthwhile was our summer reading club, which we have sponsored for the past five years, with varying degrees of success. Our children have the same guidelines as the nonhandicapped children and they get the same prizes if they finish reading ten books. Usually we have from forty to one hundred children sign up and around twenty-five who listen to their books and get the prizes. Many of our children are in public school, and with this summer reading program they are doing the same thing that Johnny down the street, or their brother or sister, is doing. They don't feel that they are left out or isolated, or that they have special problems.

Carole Hund
Subregional Librarian
Farmington Hills, Michigan

Our library is sort of a classless library. No matter how much money you have, these books are not really available to you unless you get them from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. I enjoy the fact that we have quite a few prominent people whose names we recognize when we go through our records, and they are using our service just like someone who might not have a dime in his pocket.

I was the head of adult services here at the Farmington Hills branch and when I was offered the position in the subregional library I took it because it sounded like a very challenging job, something that would be worth doing. Since I am so new at this job, I have done much reading, because I really needed training in how to work with people who are blind and physically handicapped. I knew nothing about it, but now it seems to me that in every job, people need some information about how to handle their feelings about handicapped people. Not everyone comes in contact with these people in normal day-to-day living, so it is important that we understand how people want to be treated and how we should approach them, regardless of our job.

So, everyone in library school could certainly use more understanding of the handicapped, even if they are not going to end up in the kind of job that I have now. In the adult department there is a noticeable quiet when somebody who has a physical handicap comes in. It is almost a fear on the part of the entire staff. "How do I handle this person? What should I do? Am I going to do all right?" We are uncomfortable because we have never been told what to do or how to relate to these people.

Right now at the Greater Detroit Society for the Blind, I am coming into contact with well-educated blind people, and I am getting their outlook on how they perceive other people and the world about them. I think that these contacts are almost more important than anything

that I could be reading, because from them I pick up ideas and perceptions.

I have felt the need to get out and publicize what we have to offer here because so many people seem to be unaware that the service is even available. I do a tremendous amount of publicity work, and it is not so difficult for me as it might have been five years ago. The Farmington library is a very progressive library and as head of the adult department I did quite a bit of public speaking. In fact, experience in public speaking is something I did not get in library school, and when I started out as a librarian I had no idea I was going to be out there speaking to groups.

In our library we recruit for the subregional library position from the librarians who are already working here, but this job is considered a promotion, so I think that the better librarians have been asked to work in the subregional library. We have had some excellent people in this job, people who have had many innovative ideas, and that is one reason our subregional library is as active and good as it is. But this kind of job might attract someone who does not want to be in front of the public much, because many patrons do not come in. I think that this position should not go to someone with that idea. I think it should go instead to someone with a positive outlook about speaking engagements and public contact. I know there are people here at our library who would not want to go out to talk before the public, who do not have that skill. I do not believe that you can have a service like this and just sit down, send out books to patrons, and keep the circulation going, because if that is all you do, eventually the service will die on its feet.

Every day I learn something new and I feel more confident in my ability to handle this job. I miss my reference work very much, but then I do reference work here, also. There is very little transportation available in our community, but we still have people who come here and we try to encourage them to. I have told my staff that even though we are rushed to get our work done, it is very important to spend time with the patrons when they do bother to come in. I think that it is very important that they have contact with us and talk to us. Their visit here should not be like a visit to a doctor's office where one feels as if the doctor really doesn't care but just wants to get the patient in and out as quickly as possible. So I have told the staff that even if they are busy, they should take a few minutes to talk to the patrons and to make them feel welcome so that they will come back.

This job holds a lot of self-satisfaction for me personally. I feel that I am doing something worthwhile, though I have always believed that

working in a library is worthwhile. People who come into a library really want your services, and appreciate what you are doing, whether it is a library for the blind or any other library. But I think that there is an added feeling in this library, when you have someone say to you, "You just don't know what this means to me." You are touching the lives of many people, not only housebound people who may have nothing to do but read, but also very active people who have many different things in their lives.

The frustrations are many. We have too much work for too few staff, and too few hours in the day. I am fortunate, though, to have two pleasant, capable library assistants. They work very hard and are dedicated to their jobs. We are all working as fast as we can, but we are all frustrated because of the lack of time. We simply need more staff in this library to do the work that we want to do. We are worried about things that we hear about budget cuts, but Oakland County's library board is very supportive of our services and we believe that regardless of what might happen to state and federal funding, we probably can function at some level through Oakland County.

There are many things that I would like to see in the future. I would like to have a display of low-vision aids available, since there does not seem to be anything like that in this area. I would like to do more programming in the library, and offer programs that would interest handicapped people so that they would come to the library for something more than just to check out talking books. If we had enough staff people, we could try to help people on a more individual basis, which is possible in a subregional library. We serve 1,490 patrons and we have a big, active library.

I have found continuing education to be very helpful, regardless of the position that I have had. The administrators of this library want us to participate in continuing education, but I have found few offerings in this particular area of service. Moreover, I have found that I am in a management position here; since I am overseeing the library, I am going to be taking some management classes. I also am working with a class of library school students who are doing a survey comparing subregional and regional library services. It will be interesting to see what they come up with, and how the patrons perceive the service that they are getting.

Also on the subject of education, libraries are having a hard time just surviving, because of budget cuts, and other librarians may be thinking, "We don't have any money for regular library service, so why should we give money to some special library for the blind and handicapped?" We librarians should take the stand that we are going to give

library service to everyone, and that should certainly include the blind and physically handicapped or anyone else in the community who needs service. I have heard many negative comments from librarians who believe that our service is a frill and that if anything is going to be cut, this library is it. This is a very frightening aspect of this service right now.

On Saturdays we have only one person working here. The library assistant who worked last Saturday is relatively new so it was her first Saturday experience. We had nine walk-in patrons during the first three hours that the library was open. Nine walk-in patrons in the reference department would not really mean much, but anyone who has worked in the library for the blind knows that when you have nine walk-in patrons, starting up new service and other things, you need to spend considerable time with each one of those patrons. The library assistant was quite thankful that the patrons did not all walk through the door at once; they were spaced about fifteen minutes apart. But handling them consumes much of your time. You want to give them all the help and information you can because it might be your only in-person contact with them once the service has been started.

In a public library, you work with all kinds of patrons, some of whom can be negative, antagonistic, and demanding (and we have some patrons like that, too). But most of the patrons of a subregional library are thrilled about the service. At Christmas time we receive letters of praise, and people bring in presents of plants and candy. It is always nice to know that people appreciate what you are doing when you are working hard. Also, in a subregional library, patrons get to know you by name. We have a newsletter, and the one that just went out introduced all the new staff members, giving a little background about each one so that the patrons will know us.

I said that one of my goals is to do more programming to bring more people into the library. I feel that any time you can bring people into the library for whatever reason they feel more at home and better able to use the library. Once people are in the library and you tell them about the other things that are available, you have probably interested some people who have never used public libraries before. They are quite surprised to find that the public library is a very pleasant place to visit as well as a place that has something to offer everyone in the community.

Jim DeJarnatt
Regional Librarian
Atlanta, Georgia

We need librarians who can go that extra mile in trying to fulfill a patron's request. Our clientele, besides being handicapped physically, may also be elderly or relatively inarticulate and illiterate. So you really have to reach out to find out what they want, and once you get their request, you have to go to extraordinary lengths to try and make them happy. So this is definitely a service-oriented career, and someone who cannot stand complaints, for instance, should not be in this business.

Our building is in very poor physical condition. Most of the time the utilities work, but the biggest problem is a hole in the roof in a large room that was formerly used for machine storage. People walk by there and hear water running. We have learned to live with this problem, but it is always a surprise to patrons who come in for the first time. They say, "How can you work in a place like this?" We have become used to it, but the fact is that in some respects the handicapped are low on the totem pole. That is one of the crosses we bear—that we're out here on the wrong side of the tracks, literally, in a bad part of town, and our roof has a hole in it. However, we have real hopes of moving to another location next year, right smack in the middle of town.

I would strongly urge other regional libraries to investigate setting up subregional libraries. Because we did this, we have had the good fortune to have increased funding here in Georgia. We have a statewide network of satisfied customers. Getting funding support and providing good service are easier when you have more than one librarian for the blind and handicapped in each state. Some regional libraries are in a capital city and the librarians feel that they don't want to share their turf with anybody else. Are they the only ones who have the gift of being able to deal with handicapped people? I have thirteen other librarians who share that gift with me in Georgia and I don't know what I would do if I had twenty thousand people calling just me all the time.

In some of our subregional libraries, though, the sponsoring library has the attitude that the subregional library is an entity to be pushed over to a corner of the library away from regular services. This attitude is hard to overcome, but it is being overcome as the subregional librarians have involved themselves in activities that bring in the handicapped readers. They really go out there and do things to get these people involved in the library. The talking-book patrons feel that the whole library is theirs, not just the talking-book section. They are welcome to come to story hours, or to film presentations, or to consult the reference librarians or to take part in other activities besides talking books. One of our librarians is doing a really good job with a book discussion group for the handicapped, and we're all tickled to death about that.

Another problem in promoting subregional libraries is that the funding comes from the state and in some cases the state does not want to share the service with local libraries, even though sharing would increase the amount of service available to our patrons. Then some public librarians feel that if the state is going to take care of the service, they have no responsibility at the local level.

All the librarians in talking books in this area meet and talk with one another quite often. We have meetings in the state three or four times a year, we meet with two neighboring states once a year, we meet with the southern conference biennially, and we meet at the national conference biennially. So we exchange ideas, solve problems, and get our questions answered; I think this explains perhaps why the southern conference is so good. When somebody starts a new program somebody else can copy it quickly. Lack of communication in other parts of the nation can really impede cooperation.

I don't know who to give the credit to, but in Georgia the legislature has always been aware of libraries and their needs. We are not the richest state in the southeast, and we are probably the most illiterate. But somebody, twenty or thirty years ago, persuaded the legislature how important libraries are, and supporting them became a habit.

Susan Williams
Subregional Librarian
Alpena, Michigan (part-time)

Assistant Director
Northland Library Cooperative

Most of our donations have come through Lions Clubs and other civic clubs. In this area their meetings are not very formal; they meet in hunting lodges, cabins, almost anywhere. I trekked to one meeting where they had been cooking Polish sausages, drinking beer, and playing cards for a while before I arrived. I thought, "So now comes a librarian?" The walls were just steaming from the cooking in this little hunting cabin and I felt crazy walking in there with all my talking books. But, for an hour and a half you could have heard a pin drop in that cabin, the people were so interested in what I had to say. And when the meeting was over they voted me half of the treasury.

I started out to be a commercial artist, finished my degree in art, and then held a number of jobs including art therapy and teaching in special education. Then I applied for a job at the local newspaper, not knowing how to type or how to work a camera, but thinking that with my background in art I would enjoy writing and photography. They gave me six weeks to learn and I fell in love with journalism. For five years I covered two counties for the paper and was very much involved in information gathering. In 1977 I went to library school, with my first thought being to become a children's librarian. My adviser, though, suggested that I go into administration and public library work. I was very fortunate that during my year of school the director of the Northland Library Cooperative, who had known me from my work with the newspaper, offered me the position of assistant director of the cooperative.

When I came to my new job I discovered boxes piled about eight feet high around my desk. They were something called the Library for the Blind. I was given the opportunity of establishing a subregional library from the very beginning. Although the job was very frustrating and hard, it was also a joy in that I had the chance to organize it from the ground up. There are seventeen public libraries in our cooperative and I have my office in cooperative headquarters. Theoretically we

charge off half my time to the Library for the Blind, but somehow I spend anywhere from sixty to seventy hours a week on it. I think I am a full-time volunteer and a part-time subregional librarian. We serve nine counties that are in our cooperative and three that are not. Across 7,000 square miles we serve 550 individual patrons and 42 institutions; we circulate from 20,000 to 25,000 books each year, and we answer around 500 reference requests a year.

Even before I came to the job, our library board wholeheartedly supported the idea of the Library for the Blind. The problem was that our librarians did not favor it at first. Many of them were not comfortable with services to the handicapped and they saw this as a budget infringement on the other services. "They aren't my responsibility!" was the common cry. But the exciting thing that has happened, along with the fact that we have grown from 157 patrons to 550 patrons in four years, is that our librarians, when asked to rank their service priorities for next year, marked the Library for the Blind third, right behind interlibrary loan and book grants.

We have tried to publicize the subregional library through the local library and we've tried to make it an integral community service. I've based everything I've done on the theme of neighbors helping neighbors, and this works very well in a rural area where almost everybody in a community knows the person who takes the talking-book service. I have tried to establish volunteers who will visit our patrons in as many of the local communities as I can. I have worked with the Lions Clubs, the special education teachers, the department of mental health, and others in all these communities, saying, "Let's all get in on this show together and bring this service together to the people." I think it has become quite visible in the local areas and that has helped us tremendously. I cannot cover over seven thousand square miles myself. Our whole staff, the librarians in the seventeen libraries, their boards, the local communities, and the volunteers are all involved.

Because of my job as assistant director, I am on the road often doing consultant work and holding workshops on topics such as finances, cataloguing, and reference work in our local libraries. When I can, I try to combine that travel with calling on talking-book patrons in the area. The greatest joy I could ask for would be to spend the whole summer traveling and visiting my patrons in their homes, on their turf. People are different in their homes; they are more themselves and they open up much more. I would just love to do that, but it will probably never happen. I have found out, though, that whenever we have a patron who seems to be a problem I can usually straighten things out by making a home visit.

We have one lady who is living in a trailer out in the woods. She is eighty-something, and her husband is older than she is. She cannot move from her couch, so there she lies all day on a couch in a trailer in the middle of nowhere, unable to see out the window. When I went to visit her, she had orange crates all around her couch with her talking books spread out on them. She had called originally because her talking-book machine had broken, and I immediately understood why she was so angry and upset at that. When her machine goes out, that is as distressing for her as my car quitting on the freeway is for me. It's her whole world. They were so excited by my visit. Her husband was waiting way out at the highway for me, and when I came in I saw that he had baked a cake and they had all their children's photo albums spread out for me to look at. After my visit, we never had any trouble, even though she does have this thing about liking to read mysteries that don't have murders in them. But we understand each other now. These are the personalized services that we get involved in.

When somebody calls in and he is irritable about something all of a sudden, I know that something has gone wrong and right away the old antennae go up, I start talking with him to see if I can help. Many of our patrons find us a good place to call. They feel so cut off sometimes, and when something goes wrong and they need help, we are very grateful that they do call us. I have passed out big green stickers with the library phone number in large print and the words, "Call collect for help." They put this by their telephones and they really do use it.

Within our service area we have a major diagnostic clinic, with a large staff of ophthalmologists there. We get many of our referrals immediately from the doctors over there, who view this as their way of giving these people something to look forward to. Often by the time the patients get home, after a difficult diagnosis, an overwhelming depression sets in. We have seen this as a cycle, almost like the Kubler-Ross cycle with death. The first time we had a suicide call, it was from a person 250 miles away from us. I was at the main library and the call came in to the person at the central desk, who didn't even think of the intercom, but just came charging up the stairs to me. All the patron kept saying was, "I'm going to take my life." I continued talking to him while other staff called to obtain emergency help there in the community. This is where it helps to be a subregional library, because you can visualize the situation in the community and you know whether to call the volunteer fire department, the health center, or somebody else.

I had no previous administrative experience when I inherited a staff and had to carry them through all these changes. My staff was like

many of our librarians. They were very dubious about taking on handicapped services, because like many people, they were uncomfortable at first in working with the handicapped. It became a learning process for them. One of the first things we did was hold a day-long workshop for the staff. That workshop evolved into a whole series of workshops that I have presented in conjunction with the vision specialist of the school district. We have become an Abbott and Costello team as we conduct these workshops for schools, civic groups, museums, and groups like that. We began in an effort to help the staff become more comfortable with the idea of working with the handicapped, but much of their adjustment was just a matter of time. Staff who when they heard we were starting this service said, "Oh, no, not me! I couldn't do that!" are now choosing to work in the Library for the Blind over other departments in the library.

Being one of only a few subregional librarians whose rank is that of administrator, I have the advantage of not having to go through layers of bureaucracy. We are so small that I am in charge.

In library school I don't recall that anyone ever discussed handicapped patrons. I also cannot recall that anyone ever came in to tell us about the joys of dealing with people in public service. That fact was really a missing element and it turns out that this is the most exciting part of our job. I am working hard as an administrator because I have an equal love for reference, research, and interlibrary loan, and I have been working to bring electronic networking to northern Michigan. I'm very much in favor of computerization, but at the same time I see it definitely as only a means to an end. To me it is a way to improve services and to give the staff more time to be out there interacting with the people directly. That is where I think you can have the most exciting career.

When I consider the opportunities in service to the handicapped, I think that maybe these opportunities could be better emphasized in library school. What other area in library work offers you the opportunity to work in collection development, administration, outreach, readers' advisory, audio-visual technology, and fund raising, as well as in public relations? You also are involved in both adult and children's services.

We have perfomed a number of database searches. One of the most rewarding was for one of our patrons who had a spasticity problem from cerebral palsy. We were able to get the information for his doctors so that they could operate on him. Much social work also comes into our job. I have found that we have a sizable number of amputees using our service, and one thing we have done is to put them in touch with each

other. They may be two hundred miles apart, but when one goes in for surgery, the others form a telephone support group. We have a couple of people teaching each other knitting by telephone. They cannot get out of their homes and they have never even met each other, but we have put them in touch. Our people are very isolated. So that's an opportunity—call it social work or what you will—that comes with this service. And I think that there is a kind of person who enjoys this type of work, who really wants to do it. I do not know that there is any way that you can train this characteristic into anyone. The people who tend to go into this field seem to be people who want to work with people. The librarians are very outgoing, very caring, and a grand fraternity.

Within our own state now we are facing a really difficult funding period, with the possibility that LSCA funds will be lost in September. But we have been very fortunate. This program has sold not only its own merits, but the merits of library services in general to local communities. Librarians are willing, and our board is willing, to finance this from the general fund next year because of our proven value. One thing that we have to be careful about is to not intrude in the fund-raising opportunities of our local libraries. It would be difficult, for instance, if I went to the county board of commissioners and asked them for money to help support the Library for the Blind, while my director also needed to obtain funds to support the public library. This situation is repeated throughout each county or city in our district, so I feel that everything that we do in terms of funding or promotion has to be done through our local libraries. We incorporate the local library into our efforts so that our service will be seen as something that is, and should be, supported by local taxes.

When we moved to our new headquarters, we held an open house to which some local politicians came. There had never been any other way to get them into the library, but "handicapped" tugs at the heart and can be a drawing card that is much more effective than a new computer. This is another area where I think that services for the handicapped can help the public library in general. On another occasion we had a patron open house on the same day that we had an awful storm. We were shocked when people started arriving. They came, and they came, and they came from many counties away, even though the weather was terrible, and they stayed. Toward the end of the day our director hinted to them, "It's getting near time for me to go home for dinner." And the people were still sitting there, making no move to go. They had found a place and they were quite content, visiting with each other. They don't get to see other handicapped people very often.

It was like old-home week, and we didn't know whether we were going to have to bed them down for the night, too.

Another thing that surprises me is the number of relatives of handicapped people who want help from somebody at the subregional library. They do not know how to handle their situation sometimes and just need somebody to talk to. We had one mother who drove all the way over here from the other side of the state. She arrived with her blind son just as we were closing and I couldn't send her home. They came in and visited. It turned out that she didn't so much want her son to see the library, but she had him home for the first time in a year and she was feeling the effects of trying to cope with him. She simply needed somebody to talk to who understood the blind, and in her own small community there was nobody else who was coping with these same kinds of problems.

We try to keep in touch with our patrons and I am hoping soon to institute a birthday-card service because so many of our people love greeting cards. Whenever we travel on business anywhere we usually send out fists full of postcards. The patrons like the idea of getting mail from the subregional library, from one of us; it keeps up the personal touch that is really important to the person who is homebound. I went to China two summers ago and while I was there I picked up some paper cards for our patrons, because they were so bright and colorful. I know some social workers are told not to do these kinds of things, not to get too personally involved, but I'm in favor of it. Our whole staff takes time off on the afternoon before Christmas to call many of the people and wish them happy holidays. I will call some of our most desperate people on Christmas day, because they are really alone; they are bedridden, and they have no relatives coming to visit them. I think we have to get involved that way. When I was a newspaper reporter it was the same. I loved doing the feature stories, meeting the people, and going in and talking with them in their homes. I loved worrying about their problems.

One day we announced on the radio that we needed volunteers. Some patrons of ours who are developmentally disabled employees at the sheltered workshop heard it and volunteered. They went to their employer and asked if they could be volunteers. So we got together and now between six and eight of the workshop clients are processing all our incoming circulation for us. They come and pick up all of our bags of mail and take them back to the workshop, where they have set up an assembly line to handle our books. Every cassette book is opened and inspected, the cassettes rewound, and the case washed. Every record container gets the same treatment. Then they are all repacked in

numerical order. This has been a real training program for the workshop clients because they are learning to work with number skills, to run the cassette rewinder, and even to fix a loose tape. The supervising staff over there, people who are also involved in the larger community, see all our little notes from patrons about how happy they are with the service and what they think about a particular book. This has not hurt us in terms of public relations at all. When a staff member over there opens a container and a hand-crocheted handkerchief or a check for ten dollars falls out, they begin to realize how vital this service is to the patrons.

We also had a group of thirty schoolgirl volunteers who were trained to act as guides whenever a convention of blind people was in the area and needed their help. They also made a Christmas tape of their own writings and songs, which we sent out to the patrons. The tape was just a sketch, it was so homegrown. At first I was embarrassed about sending it out. I said to my husband, "This wasn't the way I was taught to make audio-visuals in school." But he loved listening to it and said, "You can't miss with that. It's like an old country school Christmas program. Put it out and see what happens." So we did, and the response was incredible. Many of our patrons asked us if they could buy the tape because they wanted a copy to keep.

Here is one of my dreams. I would like to see if I could get the Lions Clubs in our area to fund some scholarships for some of our handicapped patrons to go to a National Library Service conference in Washington. I would like to be able to go with them, maybe five or six of us, because I would like to have the opportunity to show them the organization. I would also like to have the National Library Service people meet some of these patrons from the rural areas.

We try to stress interdependence for our patrons, even for the young children. I try to wean the parents from calling us for their children as soon as I can. "Don't you do it for him. Let him and me struggle it out together and let him learn. This can be the first experience of independence for him, getting his own information." It takes a while and the first time the children call they are usually scared. But when they do call, it makes everybody on the staff feel good. "Joey called us himself today!" It's a real breakthrough. It is also surprising when Joey does not ask for the kind of books that his parents were ordering for him.

We put little black dots on the books with annotations saying "explicit sex" or "strong language." Many of our elderly people, but not all of them, do not want such books. We had two little blind boys who were coming into the library to pick out their own books. We

never said a word, but in a few months they had figured out the black dots by feeling them. The next thing we knew they were asking us for headsets. They had figured out that those books might be "no-nos" and they were going to take them home and listen to them without their mothers' knowing what they were listening to. Their mothers had been choosing their books, books of a different type. We gave them the headsets and thereafter they had exactly what they wanted to read. The funny thing was that, over three years, they read their way through some of the world's best literature, thinking that they were getting away with something.

Then we had one eighteen-year-old patron who was the victim of a motorcycle accident, in traction at the hospital. His mother called us in hysterics because he kept ordering and getting motorcycle books. She wanted us to send him some other kinds of books. It was really upsetting her to think that he was reading about motorcycles all the time that he was recovering from his accident. We sent out what he wanted anyway, since he was the person we were serving.

There is a way to tell the story of this service, a way to get it out, and that is where my background in media has been helpful. We have been very fortunate, also, in the media coverage we have had, but then the reporters are old friends of mine. And I think that a subregional librarian has to be willing to go out and speak to groups, and willing to say that there are no fixed hours to this job. If the club is meeting tonight in Oscoda, forty-five miles away, and if they are meeting at 7:30 in a dark bar where I am going to have a rig up my talking-book machine, I will do it. The last time I spoke to a group, a band started playing on the other side of the curtain. You run into all these problems. I called my director one night when I came home from speaking at a senior citizens' meeting and said, "It finally happened. I knocked them dead!" He said, "You're kidding." I said, "No, a man stood up right in front of me when I was speaking and dropped dead!"

You have many remarkable experiences when you go out in the community and talk directly to the people. You do not score immediate success in your own mind every time, but success generally comes. I think this is not a service for somebody who wants to go out the door at four o'clock; it is not geared that way. And if someone wants to try to do the job that way, he or she will never get the full personal satisfaction that is possible. You have to carry this service with you, in your heart, wherever you go.

Francis Ezell
Regional Librarian
Nashville, Tennessee

When I go out for my talks, I bring along a print-braille book to tell the audience how important it is. I tell them that when print-braille first came out, I thought that the Library of Congress might have been wasting money. Then one day we had a gentleman come into the library in a wheelchair. He was blind and he had a form of arthritis, so he was not able to manage books well. His wife and this three-year-old son brought him to visit with us. The man said, "Ms. Ezell, I need something for my little boy. He wants me to read to him." And I said, "We'll start sending you some books that have the record-book combination." That was back when we had more of those. He said, "But you've already done that." Then I said, "How about some of the braille books that are for kindergarten through third grade?" He said, "You've already done that, too." And I thought, "What are you going to say next? You've got to come up with an answer here." "I have just the thing. We'll get you some of those print-braille books. You can read to him and he can look at the pictures and the words while you do it." When I came back with the books, the little boy came running over. His father and I were talking, but the little boy kept tugging at his father's arm, saying, "Daddy, are you really going to be able to read that whole book to me?" Finally we had to stop our conversation while the boy climbed up on his father's knee and had some pages read to him. When the boy was satisifed that his father was going to be able to read to him, we went away and happily looked at other things. This is something that really happened and the story helps me to bring out a point. It has helped me in telling people about the importance of the different kinds of materials that we have.

As assistant regional director in Cookeville, I drove the bookmobile in the hills of middle Tennessee and enjoyed it thoroughly. It gave me a good background in meeting people, the country people and all kinds of people, because when I went out on a bookmobile I did see all kinds. With the mountain people of Tennessee you can't expect to be ac-

cepted automatically; you have to play it by ear. They accepted me really well.

In 1968 we had 1,500 people who were receiving talking books from out of state and it was decided that we should open a talking-book library of our own here in Tennessee. They asked me if I would be interested in the job. I am ashamed to say that before then I had never realized that there was library service for the blind and handicapped. This was one thing I had never heard of in library school. So, when they asked me if I would be interested, of course I said yes. I came down here in 1968 and have been with the program ever since.

I think that library schools should have some courses that have something to do with library service for the blind and physically handicapped. I do not believe that anybody is going to want to study only library service for the blind and handicapped, but there ought to be some courses that would apply to this subject, as well as general library training. In this service, you need all the general knowledge that a regular public librarian has, plus some other things.

I would not want a job that required me to sit in an office all the time where I did not see the patrons or serve people. To be at a desk all the time would drive me crazy. Usually I can talk to the blind and handicapped and get along fairly well with them. I have not had many problems that could not be solved after we talked a while.

As far as my family is concerned, I had a sister who was bedridden all her life. This fact makes a difference in my feelings about the program. She lived to be fifty-eight years old. When she died, she was blind in one eye, because she had read so much, straining and lying in one position. During this time I did not know that there was anything like talking books. She was about twenty years older than I was, so I had always had a handicapped person in my family. Therefore I knew how to relate to handicapped people. I think that some people have to be taught to deal with handicapped people, or to feel easy with them. Not everyone feels easy with handicapped people. When I am considering hiring a person for this library, I listen to how applicants communicate with me, and that tells me how they are going to communicate with other people. I think this is very important, because we have so many people that call us and pour out their souls to us. Staff here have to be able to talk with the people, to meet them, and to show them around.

I go out and talk to groups, and I like that part of the job. I get so wrapped up in the program that my voice shows that I am very involved in it. I wish that I could eliminate some of this, but then sometimes it makes more of an impression on people when they know that you really care. I am always a little nervous before I get ready to

speak to a group, but I sometimes think that you have to be nervous in order to get geared up for it. I would like to be able to organize speeches better; I tend to ramble sometimes.

My advice for library school students is to remember that this service is available when they get out and are working. They should always keep it in mind. When I tell people about the service, they often do not think that they know anyone who is eligible, but if they think about it, they usually remember somebody. And certainly a librarian is expected to know about all the library programs that are available.

I work more than a forty-hour week, but if I have to go to a meeting or to set up an exhibit on a Saturday, I can take that time off some other time. Some people call me at home and want me to come by and pick up a machine, or they call and ask me to bring home a machine the next time I come home. In this job you do some things that you would not ordinarily do if you were working in a public library. I think so many times that we are our patrons' only contact. Someone may sit home for days and not talk to anybody and then he calls us and may want to stay on the phone for thirty minutes or more. The five girls that I have making book selections listen to much of this. People want to talk about their family and things that they have done. So really, we do feel as if we are a part of the family. We have had older patrons who have passed their high school equivalency tests. When they finally get their diploma, we almost feel as if we ought to march across the stage with them. We have sent them books and talked over the courses with them. We really do get very close to them.

One girl wrote to us several years ago when she was fifteen; she was taking care of her mother, who had arthritis. She wrote, "Mother dearly loves to read, but she had not been able to do so for so many years because of her crippling arthritis, it hurt so bad. Now this is all changed because of the talking-book program. Now she can enjoy her books. God must have a special place in heaven for people like you all."

Marlene Temsky
Subregional Librarian
Worcester, Massachusetts

Five and a half years ago, the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System received a grant to hire a head of the Talking Book Library, where talking books had been sent for three years, and they were nice enough to think of me for the position. It was technically a clerical position and still is, even though my boss had agreed last year to try to negotiate an upgrading. Then Proposition 2½ came along and I suspect this is not the time to talk about upgrading anything. But the nature of the job has changed so much since the beginning that it is certainly no longer a clerical position by the stretch of anybody's imagination.

In those years we went from strictly a warehouse operation, sending out 16,000 books to 600 borrowers, to almost a full-service center for the handicapped. We had 1,155 borrowers at last count and we circulated 42,000 volumes last year.

We set up an advisory council of patrons, and one of their first recommendations was that we move from our architecturally inaccessible building at the far reaches of the community. Since we could not move we set up a service area for talking books at the main library, and put there the Kurzweil Reader and the Visualtek, page turners, and page magnifiers. We have demonstration collections on handicaps, vertical file information, and much more than anyone ever dreamed of having, all funded through federal grants which my boss and I wrote. Then last year we got a grant of $30,000 from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind to hire a tape technician and a volunteer coordinator. The grant was not renewed, but my boss was able to get some funds to keep the personnel. My boss is head of the library system and I would not go so far as to say that talking books is a pet project of hers, but it is the jewel in the crown. Of course, there has been much focus on service to the handicapped, so the time is ripe for this.

We have been automated for almost five years. This is a story in itself—or a soap opera. When I took the job, the programs were all

written and it was just a matter of getting the system running. After a year and a half the system was in such chaos that we had to go back to a manual operation for ten months while the city threatened to sue the manufacturer. They did sue and at that point every time I turned around there were six men in three-piece blue suits at my elbow saying, "What can we do for you?" This lasted for a long time and I was able to go through my "wish list" trying to make the automated system work.

I am going to library school now, and as far as I'm concerned it is very much a matter of having the credential. Are they teaching me anything particularly relevant? No, they are not. I am only on my third course, but I feel that if I don't volunteer some information on services to the handicapped, nobody else will. At library school they are saying now that librarians no longer have the choice of being political or not being political and I think later on they are going to give us more of the "how to." Outside speakers who have been particularly successful in the political arena have spoken to our classes and they are meant to inspire us. Sometimes I come away feeling, "I could never do that."

My fellow students and I spend much time talking about the fact that we are not going to be making a lot of money, but we are going to be doing something that is really worthwhile. As I said, it seems as if I am the one who has to remind the world that there are handicapped people who will have to be served, but I have the feeling that when my fellow students go out into their public libraries they will remember this—they will be tuned in to handicapped services. There are a few people who are planning to go into special library work, but they are in the minority. They keep telling us in library school that if we want to make money we should go to work for Dupont or Lockheed. But the public library people seem to have sorted through what life is all about and have decided that it is really important to be doing something worthwhile.

I believe that our subregional library has too little contact with the patrons. We have been keeping statistics on how many people use the service area at the main library and they are pretty discouraging. We have not found successful outreach methods, so we spend much time on the phone trying to convince people out there that we are real people, and trying to remind ourselves that our patrons are real people. One way that we are trying to get around the lack of contact is by using volunteers who will go into patrons' homes and talk to them about their library needs.

The community knows much more about handicapped people because of our efforts here. We have had some good press and have been on television. We have contacted many able-bodied people, too, who

say things like, "I never knew that a person who had cerebral palsy wasn't necessarily mentally retarded." I get upset when I run into poor attitudes about the handicapped, and I think, "I'm going to do something about that right this minute!" At the same time I am sure that when I started this job, I thought like most other people, that the handicapped were an esoteric minority to be treated specially.

When we decided to open a service area at the main library, the library staff resisted. There was an issue of turf; nobody wanted to give us one square inch. And we heard, "I don't see any handicapped people here, so why should we have a service area?" So we ran six handicapped-awareness workshops and brought in handicapped people to show the staff that they need not break out in a rash if somebody in a wheelchair comes in. And yet, for quite a while we were just being tolerated. What helped our acceptance the most was that we have two blind staff members, and of course they're real people, with the same gripes and the same delights as everybody else on the staff. Their presence has done a great deal to change attitudes.

When our patrons visit the library and state their needs, our knee-jerk response is not, "Either it's on talking books or you don't get it." We look at the big picture and dip into government documents or whatever we need to help the patrons. If they want something in print we have no problem. That is our whole orientation and in each issue of our newsletter we try to mention some aspect of the main library or the regional library system that is available to everybody. We keep emphasizing that these resources are available to everybody.

I hope this doesn't sound too simplistic, but I would really like a building that we could all live with. I would like a building where I could have my whole book collection in one place. The service area could stay at the main library if that's what makes people happy. But I want one building that is architecturally accessible and I have the idea of a real community center facility. Even as a warehouse operation we are doing really poorly in this building, and the situation is affecting staff morale. Yesterday we had eleven people and a dog in an area that should really be for four people. Staff, volunteers, and dog were falling all over each other.

The other thing I would really like is an outreach vehicle so the volunteers could visit people in their homes. A van could also bring patrons to the library. We conducted a user survey a few years ago and one of the biggest problems mentioned with using the subregional library was transportation. People said, "I would come to library programs, if I could just get there." I ran a braille Scrabble tournament not long ago and we sent notices to 1,400 people. How many do you think

showed up? Four. It was terrific, though, and we got a huge article in the newspaper out of it.

I remember, when I first came to this job, what librarians in this service were saying about the requirements for this kind of job. What they were saying was, "Never mind what the transcript says, what you need is thick skin, big vision, and a sense of humor."

Eileen Keim
Regional Librarian
Concord, New Hampshire

There is a view in our specialty field that regional libraries should not be warehouses—places that store and ship books and magazines. It is thought instead that regional libraries should be "service centers" providing a full range of services such as reference, activities, and programs to their readers. But this is segregation again. My view is precisely the opposite. In New Hampshire at least, each of our readers lives in a community, usually a community of his own choosing. He supports that community with his taxes and that usually means supporting a local public library. He is a citizen on multiple levels and should be encouraged to realize that he is entitled to services on various levels. We should encourage him to ask his reference question locally, and encourage him to participate in meetings and programs locally. For instance, why should one of our readers make a long-distance call to ask me a simple question such as, "Who has the all-time National League record for RBIs?" We, in turn, can support the local services with our specialized information and special format materials, and we can work to encourage local librarians to see their handicapped citizens as people whom they are supposed to serve, not as problems to be shoved off on somebody else.

Marilyn Mortensen
Subregional Librarian
Virginia Beach, Virginia

I think it would be very helpful for library schools to have some specialized courses in working with the handicapped and library services for the handicapped. When talking to librarians and special-education teachers in this area, I sense a vast lack of knowledge about the National Library Service and the services that are available for handicapped individuals. When we first opened the subregional library, people had reservations about it, because they wondered if it was needed, and they were concerned about how much it was going to cost the library department. We were operating on 50 percent ignorance and 50 percent enthusiasm, since none of the local public libraries knew much then about services to the handicapped. This was ten or eleven years ago. There was little knowledge locally about the regional library or subregional libraries in the state. The system had not been well publicized, and rather poor service was being given to handicapped people in this area.

I am proudest of improving the service and keeping in personal contact with our patrons. I also encourage walk-in patrons to such an extent that I think we do much more walk-in business than most regional and subregional libraries do. Another thing that I'm proud of is that we have not only been serving the handicapped, but we have two very well qualified blind employees here. For the past four years we have been a test site for the Kurzweil Reading Machine, which has been very valuable. We have done much work with it and we have also managed to purchase closed-circuit television enlargers, Masterlens magnifiers, and various other magnifiers to circulate. We have a very active volunteer program, including a braille course to teach sighted people to transcribe braille. We have quite a few local transcribers now who transcribe books and local public service information. We also are starting now to have a more active volunteer recording program for local interest materials.

We give many talks on radio and television and also to Lions Clubs,

other civic groups, schools, and libraries. In all these talks we stress the fact that we enjoy it when sighted people come in to visit. They can come and see what we have and then tell anyone they know who might be interested. We have a very good relationship locally with the media, which helps.

The main thing, though, is the personal contact. We encourage patrons to call and to come to the library, and for the ones who are homebound we will now have more homebound visiting. I think that when you get a book from the state level or directly from the National Library Service it is like getting a plastic box and plastic book, and the patrons get the feeling that they are numbers and that's all. At the subregional library we can find out the personal interests of the person and at this level we are better able to assess community needs and interests. I enjoy the job and believe that we really are accomplishing something within the community. Not only are we building up interest in the problems of the handicapped, but also we are able to impress on the general public that there is a large handicapped population that is not always being served as it should be. The public education end of this job is very interesting. It not only helps library services for the blind and handicapped when we go out to do our presentations, but it helps library services in general by stirring up community interest.

It used to be that anyone who came into the public library wearing thick glasses would be automatically sent to us. Now, thanks to our working very closely with the reference division, which is located in the same building that we are, luckily, if a blind person needs reference materials we can scoot right up to the reference division and get what the patron needs. We also have a close working relationship with the local branch libraries so that we can get standard-print books for recreational reading and put them on the Kurzweil Reading Machine, or have someone record then.

At first we had no budget whatsoever. I ran around "stealing" what I could from the branch library and going to savings and loan associations to "borrow" things such as pens. It wasn't low budget; it was no budget. But as word spread about us, as our circulation and activities grew, as we talked and pushed and stirred up local interest, it became easier and easier to get funds, so finally we became a separate budget unit within the library department. Every year I work out my own budget for the approval of the library director; I have been very fortunate in the library directors I have worked with.

I wish we had more space so that we could do in-house recording and have reading programs for children and adults. I also wish we could provide more public education, which would help us find those missing

readers. I also wish we could furnish transportation—maybe by using volunteers—for some of the older people who would like to come to the library but have no way of getting here. We would like to be able to furnish all the services of a regular-print branch library for members of the handicapped community, and one of the ways that we can do this without additional personnel is by using volunteers.

About 75 percent of my job is public relations and public education, generating concern for the handicapped and building interest in supplying services to them. My staff can take care of the work here if I can take care of convincing everybody of what a worthwhile, necessary service this is and how important it is for us to continue to grow. That is the major part of my job.

We serve so many characters. We have one patron, an older lady, who loves what she calls "dirty books." She requested that we send them to her in boxes marked "The Bible" so that her daughter-in-law would not know what she was reading. One character called and said he was not allowed to take his seeing-eye dog into a local hotel. I was all set to man the battle stations until it turned out that his "seeing-eye dog" was his pet chihuahua.

Lydia Carpenter
Librarian for the Blind and Disabled
Oakland Public Library
Oakland, California

Many of my patrons have never used a public library. They do not know the wealth of information that is available to them despite their being blind or physically unable to hold a print book. How do you teach people about this service without spending half a lifetime each time a handicapped person comes in, but I know, practically, that I can't. Then, if you have handicapped people on your staff, how do you supervise them? How do you supervise people who may not be knowledgeable about the library in any way and give them training? How do you train your fellow professionals in the library needs of the handicapped? How do you structure programs for the handicapped other than through your own knowledge, enthusiasm, and creativity?

I think if library schools offered just one special course in services to the blind and handicapped that would be a disservice to the patrons that we are serving. If such a special course were given, I think that it would also be a disservice to the students, the future librarians. Some people would take the course because they had an interest in working in this field, and some would take it just because it might come in handy in a situation, or it might help them to get a job. Many would not take it, because services to the blind and handicapped would simply not be within their realms of interest, and they would never expect that they might meet a disabled person or work alongside a disabled person in the library. Many people would miss this information if it were given in just one course. This is true with ethnic services; having a specialized course in ethnic services is a disservice to that group.

All students should have knowledge about serving people that they are not used to thinking of serving. The needs of special groups should permeate all the courses in library school. I can say that computer technology did enter into many of my courses and just as computers did, all these alternative forms of materials and these "alternative patrons" should be considered in all the courses in library school. I

would get really upset if just one course were given because I know that that would not force the professors in library school to look at what they are giving their students in a new light. It would not force them to think, "Now maybe we need to think about these other kinds of services and these other kinds of patrons."

I used to want to be either a research chemist or a social scientist. I used to dream of winning the Nobel Prize in chemistry for some discovery that would save mankind. My other dream was going into the Peace Corps and somehow helping people. In college I decided to major in sociology.

Then I applied to library school at University of California, Berkeley, because it was a one-year program and I would not have to spend a lifetime in school. On and off throughout my life I had library-like jobs, and these experiences suddenly came together.

In library school I found, in part, what I had experienced as an undergraduate—an isolation from the pragmatic. It was even more frustrating in library school, though, because this was the profession I was choosing and these were the professionals I was going to be working with and instructed by. In many ways they were, as my sociology instructors had been, in an ivory academic tower. They did not have professional experience in any library setting or they had lost touch with it and were not keeping current, other than in an academic way. But when I did meet some professors who had had public library experience and were willing to listen, I used to question them and ask their advice. But I found that they had many misconceptions about what senior citizens, the group that I wanted to work with, needed. Those who had not dealt with senior citizens had a misconception about their information needs. I discovered that many old people wanted basic survival information, but at school many people pictured them as little old women reading romance novels or little old men reading westerns. Those readers exist, it's true, but that isn't the whole picture.

What brought me into the area that I'm now working in was getting practical experience. I did a project for my systems analysis class at a local senior center. I surveyed the members to find out their needs and reading preferences in relation to the small library at the center. I continued to do volunteer work there during library school and after I graduated, when the director asked me to organize the meetings of the senior low-vision group. Those nine months with the low-vision group were definitely more helpful to me than library school had been for so many aspects of my current job. When I went back and talked to library school instructors about what I was doing I saw that in my profession there is a definite lack of knowledge about low-vision or

blind services. I had to investigate the talking-book program on my own and set up a deposit collection at the senior center, after I had made a couple of calls to the regional library where I finally discovered the basics of the program. I also discovered the reading devices that would help people expand their use of the library, and these were not known about in library school. I was able to arrange for demonstrations of these devices to my low-vision group. I made it a point to visit sites to see the various pieces of equipment, and I had an ophthalmologist come to the group to talk about cataract surgery. It was through these meetings that I found out about some of the things available, but there was much bibliographic information that I was not even tapping. I have been learning about this information through the job I have now. I was not given this information or any keys for tapping into it in library school.

I introduced certain ideas in my courses. In my reference class I had a teacher who was reasonably receptive to the idea of going out and serving groups which are not traditionally served in libraries. I used to bring up questions such as, "What about the reference interview, if you are meeting a disabled person? What if your desk is very high and this person is in a wheelchair? Do you take him to another table and meet him on an eye-to-eye level, make him feel welcome and comfortable in the library?" I felt that, as part of the reference course, we also needed to talk about accessibility of service and materials. If a person could not see the material, should you read it to him or should you get other readers? How do you make the material accessible? I have found it intimidating myself to go into a library and ask reference librarians for information that I knew existed. I was taught, fortunately, by my mother to ask questions. Many people are not so taught, and librarians need to know how to make patrons feel comfortable asking questions.

I used to bring up these topics and we would have discussions, but that is not enough. We did not really touch on the bibliographic control of information. For example, who are the publishers of large-print books and what kinds of materials can you expect to find in large print? Or, what recorded materials are available? I think that many of the library school professionals need to rethink and reeducate themselves first. I would like to see this information integrated in all courses, but some teachers are not going to take the time to find out about other services or materials. They may even be personally appalled that libraries have something such as video, for one thing. It is a foreign material to them, and they cannot present it to someone who might be interested in it.

I would love to see a year-long training session for instructors on

alternative forms of materials. It would have to include, among other things, the bibliographic control of materials such as braille, large-print, and recorded formats. There would also have to be something more on networks, such as how to tap into a regional library of the NLS network or how to go directly to NLS in Washington. I think that through this job and my experience in going to the regional library, having to call them and write to them for so many of my patrons, I have a better knowledge of how the system works and can pass my knowledge along. I can smooth the way for my patrons and I can imagine how confusing it is for them to approach the system, long distance, on their own.

To a certain extent I know that I still need certain skills, not only as a librarian but as an individual, skills that would help me immensely in this position. But I did bring a certain number of skills with me to school and to this job, and one of them is a certain amount of insatiable enthusiasm. Although I do get tired at times, and frustrated, I pick myself up after a fashion and keep going. You are going to be very frustrated in work like this, at times. You may spend time outside work that may never be recorded in your job hours, but you just have to do that.

You need publicity skills—the practical skills of how to put together a flyer, how to do a television show, how to be interviewed by a reporter. To some extent these skills are innate, but to a certain extent they are not, especially if you have a director who is very conscious of what is said to the press. You do not get training in this skill in library school. You do not get training in outreach skills either, and you need a certain amount of those also. These are again, in part, learned, but you could be given information about how to approach community groups, or how to meet the public in forums. Other skills I feel a definite need for are marketing and budgeting skills. How do you go out and get money, in fact? I am facing that right now. How can I help the library system maintain this service when the grant period is over? That's a very practical thing.

In this job, at times I am a reference librarian, and at other times I am a cataloguer, because I realize that to get the material on the shelves quickly I have to do it myself. At other times I am a clerical person and then I am an administrator to a certain extent. I have to be flexible in all these roles.

People who like people and have some sensitivity and knowledge of what exists can and have served some of my patrons very well in this public library. In some cases they do it much better than I can because of their expertise in certain subject fields. I tell the staff that when I

hold workshops here. But then there are always the people that make me wonder why they chose library work. No matter who walks up to their desk they are gruff and very cool. They are under pressure to serve a number of people at a time, true, but they still do not know how to work with people. I think that people who are public-service oriented and have a little added knowledge can serve handicapped people just as well as any specially trained librarian. I tell the staff that they have to see the handicapped simply as people, with the range of personalities of any other group, with the range of interests of any other group. Staff members have seen that as the blind and disabled people have started to come into this public library, the concept of what their needs are has begun to fan out beyond this particular service that I am involved in.

I would really like handicapped people to be able to call up our Eastmont Branch, for instance, in East Oakland and ask for reference service, or walk in there and ask for information. I would also like to have readers there for them. I would like to see handicapped patrons be able to get some help in filling out their talking-book order forms at a local branch. Ideally I would like to see services continue and expand; continual education for the staff should stress that all librarians have a part in serving this population. The other side of this is that when handicapped groups think of inviting people from the library to their conventions, they think of inviting only the special services librarians. They think we are their librarians, and no one else is. They need to begin tapping *all* librarians.

The first week that I was in this job I was asked to speak at a convention of blind people. Resentment was expressed at this convention, and I think that there still is resentment in the organization about services like this one. They resent that federal money is spent on special equipment or special services for a brief period of time, with no planning and no guarantee of service beyond that time. Some patrons are opposed to public libraries' offering this type of service at all. They are very critical of subregional libraries. They think that somehow they are going to lose something if the service is local, because they think it detracts from the overall service at the state level. There is also some hostility because many of these people are facing cutbacks in many other areas of their lives and they think, "We shouldn't get used to this library service because if we do we'll have to go through a big fight to keep it." They do not look forward to that, especially with the other fights over funding that are going on in the community.

Some of the patrons, though, believe that they have a voice in this service, if not in other services in the city, county, or state. They can

express their opinions and see what response there is. They can go to city officials or directors of departments and say, "We like this. We want to keep this service." For many people it is the first time that they have spoken up for libraries. I suspect they never would have seen themselves doing this for libraries if they had not been exposed to library service on the local level.

I would like to see other librarians feel they should, as a matter of course, provide service to handicapped people. When I tell them that they have a job to do in the area of certifying people for talking books and helping them with the NLS program, I get a mixed response. I think that the librarians who are very conscious of serving people do so, one way or another. But there are definitely librarians who feel, "This handicapped services department exists and we'll just refer people to them." That is often the case. They do not do outreach for this program because they do not do outreach for any program. You have a few librarians in every system who really care about serving all the people in their community and who will take what ever knowledge they get about specific groups and serve them. But of course, there are others who do not.

I think we librarians do not know how to market what we have and we definitely could be offering much more. We often sit back and think, "People are going to come to us when they need us, so we won't do anything to bring them in." I am appalled when librarians take that attitude. I know that everybody has time and funding constraints, but we could certainly do more to make ourselves and our libraries more visible. Although our buildings sit in the community, we are not in the community unless we really go out and meet the people. At this point I feel that we are not in the forefront of a movement toward serving disabled people, or in the forefront in changing society.

Patricia Kirk
Regional Librarian
Watertown, Massachusetts

The reason I went to library school was that I was getting married. I knew that I had to support a husband through graduate school, and I did not want to be a secretary. I did not see librarianship as a long-term career. It was a quick degree in something that I really liked doing, so that was the motivation.

I was on the typical children's library track. I started as a reference librarian, which is my least favorite library job. After I had worked in public libraries as a reference librarian for a year, I was promoted to head of the children's department. I did that for about three years. And that, interestingly enough, is how I got involved in the library for the blind. At that time Marya Hunsicker was the children's consultant for all the libraries, and we had done some things together for the New Jersey Library Association. I got fed up with libraries in general and with library administrators in particular, and I retired at the tender age of twenty-eight. I started working as a governess. One day I was at the library, as usual, reading books to the children I was working with, and I met a friend who was doing large-print cataloguing for Marya right after she started her job at the New Jersey Regional Library. My friend said, "Would you consider doing part-time cataloguing of braille materials?" Cataloguing is my second least favorite job, but braille is seductive, you know, so that is how I got into this field.

I can see myself doing many other things, but I love doing this. One of the nice things about this part of the library profession is that you do get feedback from the people, and it is not all negative. In fact, much of the feedback is positive. And I like knowing that something I am doing is having an impact out there. It is affecting so many people's lives, not just their "time-wasting." Selecting some mysteries for someone who can not get out and select mysteries, or can not even get out of the house is not the same to me as serving someone who trots into the public library and asks, "Do you have any of the latest . . . ?"

Sometimes we tend not to let patrons be as independent as they

should be, and I think one of the things that we have to continue to remind ourselves of is that they are thinking human beings and they need to exercise their right of choice and freedom of expression. But there are many people out there who depend on us for the materials that we provide, and that is important.

I like working with the kinds of people who seem to gravitate toward regional libraries. The staff I have worked with over the years have for the most part been very interesting, with interesting ways of looking at life. They have not been a very avaricious group. Obviously no one goes into this field for the money. So the people that I have found myself working with have been concerned about services and have had good motivation. I like the facts that the whole staff pulls together and that staff people are concerned about providing good service.

The reason I am at this particular library is that there has always been something about Perkins that has been peculiar—perhaps it is the history and the fact that the library itself has been around for such a long time. The building, strange as it may seem, exudes a potential that it is not living up to. And I always like something that is not quite doing what it is supposed to be doing. Maybe that is why I like this field. There are so many things to do that it is virtually limitless. You do not have something, so you have to create it. The task is just not the same as looking something up in a catalogue and buying it. You have to use a few more gray cells.

I really think that every librarian has to be motivated by something other than sitting at the desk looking at piles of work. People have to be inwardly motivated. I don't really care what motivates them, but they have to have a reason for showing up every day, day after day, when they know what it is going to be like. Hyperactivity is the key. People who are able to do more than one thing at once—such as people who can select books while they are talking to patrons on the phone—are very valuable. When I hire I always look for people who are hyperactive, and who love crossword puzzles, knitting, crocheting, or crewel to the point of staying up all night long just to finish it. I also look for people who are very "verbal" and like to interact with people, but who are mostly task oriented as opposed to people oriented.

One of the problems regional libraries have is that we spend too much time on the phone with people. Because it is our main contact with them, we often get to the point of becoming a counseling service rather than a library. I have no problem with that, but we do not have time to be a counseling service. I think we should look for different qualifications for people who are doing readers' advisory work if we are going to expect them to be counselors, too. There is a difference

between a humanitarian and an existentialist, and I do not want staff members who are going to be busy feeling sorry for the people we are serving. What I want is a staff of people who find meaning in doing what they are doing, as trivial as it may seem to the casual onlooker. Meaning is what is important, and I think that for the most part that is what people are expressing when they show up for work. Some people are very sympathetic, but in this business if you are too sympathetic you are in trouble. There are too many heart-rending stories out there. Rather than wanting to save the world, librarians should accept the world.

There is never enough space, time, or staff. Other than that, everything is fine. I think part of the problem with regional libraries is that nobody ever expected them to be as big a business as they turned out to be. I do not know of any facility that is really quite right. And the services grow so fast that even if you do find a new building, it does not take long before you find yourself back in the same bind. Who would have thought ten years ago that NLS was even going to be broaching the subject of micro-computers? But this is a vibrant program; there is so much going on, and if we have all been asleep for the past five years we are in trouble.

I am a great believer in telecommunications and we have been seeing movies for years that show people getting exactly what they want in their own living rooms. I can hardly wait for that time. Of course, if you want to go somewhere and sit around with other people at the library, that's fine, too. I think that the day isn't very far away when the majority of the things that we provide, such as cassettes and records, will be available at home through telecommunications. Who is going to provide this service and how it is going to get to people, I do not know. We may still wind up mailing material out, or sending braille over the telephone lines.

I do not believe that a regional library should be a public library. I do not think that we would ever have the resources to come up with all that information in one spot. Enough public libraries are having trouble being public libraries. I believe that we run a warehouse, and it is also called a regional library. At other libraries you have the book discussions, and you meet other people in the community. There you get to know about all the other kinds of interesting things that are going on, like film programs. Who cares if you can not see the film? Information takes so many forms. I think books are just a small part of it, especially for many of the people who are our clientele.

Subregional libraries have many activities, too. Regional library service is not the same. We do not provide the same kind of service

that Worcester provides. They have one thousand people; we have the other eight thousand in Massachusetts. We do not have a drop-in center. We do not have the browsing shelves. When people actually do make it across the ice floes in winter, and come in here, we are happy to see them. But if we have two people come in a week, that is a large number. Since there is only one regional library in the state, we can not be a drop-in library for many people. This is a warehouse operation, filling orders and providing people with consultant service and whatever backup is needed. Let the subregional libraries do the job that they are out there to do, which is to get the people interested in what is going on, get everybody perking, get a little life out there.

One of the problems with the way the regional system is set up is that it tends to insulate people from each other. The people sit in their houses waiting for their books, and they beat the postman over the head when they do not come, but that is about the only interaction they get, and that is not healthy. Certainly there are many people who can not do any more than that, but there are many more who can do much more than that, and they should be out there giving the public library trouble.

Out in the real world, in subregional libraries the staff gets to work real hours. We regional librarians tend to work on a civil-service schedule, which is not of benefit to our patrons or to ourselves. This is one of the reasons that I think subregional libraries are so very important, because they are accessible when people need them. Regional libraries are not. There are people who use our service who actually do work. They actually do have things that they do during the day. They are real people. It is very hard to get that point across sometimes. Everybody thinks that our patrons sit at home, rocking, waiting for the mailman to come. That is true in many cases, but certainly not in the majority. One of the things that I have loved about subregional presentations at conferences is that they provide the grass-roots revelation of what people are really like out there. We are serving a fascinating subculture. From a regional librarian's standpoint, I would like to add that often I am very envious of my readers' advisers. They are the people who get to talk to the real people. I get the complaints, the problems.

Unless there is good internal communication within the regional library, it could be very easy to have problems. Many of us are still basically shy with people, and we are shy about managing people. It is hard to boss them around and it is hard to talk to them in any human way because we are very uneasy in interpersonal relationships.

Theoretically, if I sat here with a Ph.D. in business administration,

everything would be fine. We are all aware of the problems in regional libraries and after you have gone through one situation, it is not really hard to figure out what is going on in the next situation. This leads me to believe that regional libraries have not been well managed. We have to deal with many details, and without any coordination we do what we need to do in order to get the job done. We have not really organized our operations in a logical way. We are really unskilled at policy development. Also, we are usually stepchildren to a larger agency, and we have fewer senior administrators—and those we have have very heavy workloads.

At least the people who are on the boards of trustees in public libraries use the services of the library, or their grandmothers use the services, so they have a feeling that all of their decision making connects to something. One of the problems we have with our service is that it is so expensive and so few people use it. You can not present some numbers and in any way justify the costs. And people do not even begin to understand what the costs are. If this is a priority on the federal level, the decision makers will do what they need to do to keep the program going, but they do not see it as a priority. The program is always at the bottom. It is the last program considered in most state agencies, although not in all of them. Service for the blind and physically handicapped is at the bottom, right after jail services.

Marya Hunsicker
Regional Librarian

and

Bob Hawkins
Assistant Director
Regional Library
Trenton, New Jersey

Bob: There is a kind of person who sometimes goes into library services for the blind and handicapped which I hope is dying out. This person is a do-gooder, with the best of intentions and the worst of skills. I am not saying that we should not care about our patrons, but I think that quite often the people who go into this type of library service are very paternalistic and tend to see handicapped people as people to be taken care of, people of limited intelligence. We do not do this in our library. We have a number of blind and handicapped people on our staff, and we do not cater to them at all. They get no special breaks. I do not mean that we are cruel to them, but we make very positive, strong assumptions, about both our blind and handicapped staff members and our blind and handicapped public. We assume that they are independent, worthwhile people.

The grant that we now have from the National Endowment for the Humanities is a very complimentary grant. We are developing college-level courses for our patrons with help from people who are Ph.D.s from ivy league universities. It is a high-level, scholarly project. We are reaching for the highest common denominator, and I think that that is one of the reasons that we function better than some of the other libraries for the handicapped in the country. We see ourselves as business people first, librarians second, and humanitarians third. We try to stay away from paternalistic attitudes.

Marya: I must say that I do not think that most of the librarians for the blind and handicapped that I have met are do-gooders.

Bob: No, I think this type of person went into the field at one time, but not often anymore.

Marya: I do not see myself as a librarian for the blind and handicapped. I am primarily a librarian and an administrator. I am not really even a librarian anymore. This is my program. I chose it and I was interested in it. At the time that I came into this program I had a blind foster son, so there was a definite interest there. I was a real do-gooder.

Nevertheless, the skills that I have have nothing to do with blindness and handicaps. I do not intend to develop skills along those lines. I am not going to learn to read braille. I do not have great knowledge about medical problems and I do not feel that I should have. I do think that I need more expertise in aids and appliances for the blind because they are getting technical.

Bob: Probably none of our library schools teaches us how to be political animals. We are not taught to be aggressive. We are not taught how to fight for money. We are not taught how to get along with city councils or state governments. We are just not taught how to work in a political environment. We are given an image of an ivory-tower world that we are going to enter when we finish library school. Nothing about how to get money was ever mentioned in school. I was taught how to spend the money I was given, but I was never taught how to get money on my own, although in my short career I have received over $100,000 in grant money. I am not convinced that the money is not there and I have found, when asking for money, that I have two assets: being a librarian and working in programs for the blind and handicapped. They give me an advantage.

I have two quarrels with my library education. First, the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped was never mentioned in library school. No one even acknowledged its existence. Second, I really object to the fact that I was never taught how to get money, as I have said. It just happened that my first supervisor sent me to workshops on grantsmanship, where most of the participants were not librarians. In fact, several times at grantsmanship seminars I was the only librarian there. So, I do not think that librarians have been very aggressive about getting money. When I go to conferences I hear complaints over and over: "I can't get money for this. I can't get money for that." There was nobody there writing grant proposals, and when it was mentioned people would say, "We don't have the time."

Marya: But writing grants does not take very much time. I found out about the one from consumer education only two days before it was due, so you can see that I did not spend all my efforts for six months writing the proposal. The secret is really having a concrete notion in your head of what you want to do and how you want to go about doing it. I have been at the other end of this, because when I worked as a consultant we used to read LSCA grant proposals. I was on that committee, and the appalling thing was that very few librarians asked for anything. The same people submitted grants each year. Ninety percent of the grant proposals were terrible; they were not well written, they were not well presented, they were not well thought out, and the

budgets were grossly inflated. I was the wrong person to present a grossly inflated budget to. I know that some people say you should inflate everything, but I do not believe in doing that. When I got proposals showing $20,000 for postage or $15,000 for miscellaneous, I would question them. My experience in having to read grant proposals and seeing how very poorly they were thought through and presented made me realize that it is possible to get funds. The money is out there; you just need to present yourself well. I do not think that means rubbing elbows with politicians, necessarily; it certainly does not in our line of work. But we do think through our proposals and present them in good English, with honest figures and an honest concept behind them.

The first year that I was with the Library for the Blind and Handicapped we were asked to go to a budget meeting to present our budget for the purchase of books from a fund of extra money. We were asked to present our needs before the meeting. There were about eight people at the meeting, all of whom represented demands on the money. Only two of us had presented anything prior to the meeting, and we walked away with all the available money.

I think that we attract people to library school who are often second-choice people—librarianship is a second choice for them. They thought, "Wouldn't that be pleasant, wouldn't that be nice, to sit there and read books all day." Library schools do not do anything to discourage that kind of person from coming in. Also, there is, as Bob has said, absolutely no emphasis in library school on the fact that your principal job is not as lover of books but as a manager of funds and people.

Bob: One of the most important things about the grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities is that we can document the fact that our clients will be interested in courses on drama and English literature. The automated data processor provides us with the statistics as to how many people have signed up for books in those subject areas. Also, when we go for any grant, we are frugal in our request. The grant we just got was for $40,000, but most organizations would have asked for $60,000, with the attitude that it is just federal money and they can spend it carelessly. We sat down with the grant proposal, trimmed the budget, and kept trimming and trimming it. It is obvious in looking at the grant now that there were a couple of tightwads working on it. One of the funny things about the cooperation between Marya and me is that we are both rather frugal in real life and very much bargain hunters. That is one of the reasons we have good luck getting money.

Book knowledge is important for a librarian, and a certain amount of

scholarly background is certainly an asset. On our staff, the people who have a good background in literature function better than the people who do not. I do not want to negate the idea that we want librarians who like books and people, but I think we have to look for qualities beyond that.

Marya: I really like to organize things, and that has certainly been something that I have been able to call on since I came to the Library for the Blind and Handicapped. Believe me, it really needed some organization. Going back to grants for a minute, one of the things that I did not mention is that when you manage a grant program it provides a new focus for publicity. It is an expensive way to get your public relations done, but nevertheless, each time you manage a grant you are aiming at a different public. For example, the *New York Times* came to two of our consumer education workshops and published write-ups about them. I believe that every time you can get a new foot in the door for publicity, new people are finding out about your program. It pays dividends.

Bob: I guess that my approach to librarianship has some elitist aspects. I believe in reaching the lowest common denominator and providing many westerns and romances and mysteries. But there is also the wonderful 5 to 10 percent of the public that is really intellectual and wants a great deal of mental stimulation. These people are very important, and even though they are a very small part of the whole population I think it is important to serve them with special programs. If I have any goal right now that is it—to develop more programs for that very cultured minority of the blind and handicapped community. Quite often I think that special programs of public libraries have concentrated on really odd programs; for example, one public library in New Jersey set up a dating service. When librarians are developing programs for their libraries, whether they are public librarians or librarians for the blind and physically handicapped, they should not get away from the basic idea of librarianship, which is the transmission of information and cultural heritage. I believe in programs with much intellectual and artistic content, and I do not believe in sacrificing that simply because it is not going to appeal to everybody.

Marya: I am somewhat incredulous when I hear some of the statements about subregional libraries. The people who work with our readers here can give you stories of Mr. So and So and Mrs. So and So, but they can really tell you nothing about nine thousand of our readers. Even in the subregional libraries how many patrons are coming in? How many subregional libraries are just like our regional library, where you do not know very much about the patrons and the patrons do not

know very much about you? And it is a minimal service. We have no subregional libraries in this state because of a philosophical decision made about six and a half years ago. We were moving toward centralization rather than decentralization and we were going to computerize. That is where our efforts have gone. There are some libraries in the state that have a commitment to serving the handicapped, but there have been so many cutbacks locally and in state aid that it does not seem to be a good time to emphasize that library service for the handicapped should be local.

Bob: Also, we don't have any major cities.

Marya: That is, we don't have any healthy major cities, with transportation. And we are getting what we ask for on the state level for centralized service. One of the big arguments that we have when we go for our budgets is that the money is going to one place.

Bob: We have been very successful in getting the money for automation, for the new building, and for most of the things that we have wanted.

Marya: We have also been successful in obtaining funds to increase our staff. We have nine new positions; we went from a staff of twenty-five to a staff of thirty-four. We have chosen a centralized program as a cost-efficient way of providing the service. I am sure that there are some regional libraries and some subregional libraries that are providing personalized service for a high percentage of people, but that is not the case everywhere. I think that our service matches up generally with what is provided in the better libraries, regional or subregional. The state is getting a bargain with centralization and I use that as an argument when I go to get staff or a computer or anything else.

Bob: I originally got involved in library services for the handicapped in a public library and I found that I could be more creative developing library programs for the handicapped than I could be if I sat at a reference desk all day, for instance. I think that the most important thing I get out of the job is that I like to start with my own ideas and come up with a finished product. Library service for the handicapped has given me an opportunity to be creative that I think I probably would not have had in a standard public library. The most important thing is that kind of artistic freedom to create something from scratch.

Marya: I found the field of librarianship vital and creative, with so much variety. I never expected that.

Bob: Both in library school and since I've been out of library school I have been disappointed by the fact that most librarians are not intellectual. I think many maladjusted people go into the field, and not only go into the field, but rise to the top. They are bureaucratic robots,

without much interest in books or people or ideals or anything else. If you say that 10 percent of the librarians in the country are committed, dedicated people who care about their patrons, care about learning, care about culture, and care about information, that is probably a good track record. My friends in journalism and in academia seem to find no higher percentage of competent people in their fields than I find in librarianship.

Marya: I have walked into many public libraries where I just wanted to turn around and walk out the door again. I thought, "What can I possibly do here? I have just walked into Bob's favorite century, the nineteenth. I might as well leave. There is nothing that I can contribute here." But the reward was how often I would go back to that same library a year later and see that there was something that I had said or shown, or a workshop I had done, that they had absorbed and incorporated into their practice. It still did not change the library's medieval aspect, but even bad directors and librarians do not mind being nudged or pushed along. They can improve. And after a while if the pushing and shoving are not rewarding enough and you want to follow principles that you believe in, there are places that you can do that.

Richard Leduc
Regional Librarian
Providence, Rhode Island

A few times I have been on the verge of an ulcer from frustration. And the doctor sits down and talks to me. When we have finished talking he says, "Will the service be any better with you home sick?" I say, "I'd like to think that it's better with me on the job." "Well," he says, "then just relax. Don't beat yourself down over the things that you can't change, but at least provide the service that you can provide." It makes sense, but I have to be reminded of it periodically. It is something that I try to tell the people on the staff: "Do as much as you can. If it's something that you absolutely cannot do, or are not allowed to do, don't dwell on it. Maybe tomorrow the decision will change and we can do some of these things."

We need very sensitive people to work in this field, but people who will not think that a disability makes a person an invalid. It is a narrow road to tread there. You cannot do everything for the individual, yet you must be attuned to the special needs of the person who is calling you. Because we are small here in Rhode Island, we do a bit of everything. And one of the things that I most detest about the system is that we are so busy here trying to keep up with the day-to-day work that we have no time or energy to do the planning that we really should be doing as librarians. I speak to others in this field and I see that that is a common thing. Each day when I come in I have to choose between sending books out that somebody might be waiting for or doing something that challenges me somewhat. I made notes for this interview all weekend. When I came in this morning I said to myself, " Am I going to send books out to fifty people who need books today, or am I going to get ready for this interview?" I chose to get together some of my thoughts for the interview, but that means that tomorrow in earnest I had better work to send out books.

The regional library is unique within the state library because our service is a direct, patron-oriented service that depends on everybody's doing his job every day. Other services within the state library are not

public services, but services to public library staffs. People in other parts of the library might be able to sit down and think today or tomorrow and then act on the third day. Every day we have to be sure that our books are getting out. That causes problems with members of our staff who like to be able to sit back and say, "I'm going to a meeting today and I'm not going to have two days' worth of work to do tomorrow."

Regional libraries are very diverse entities. One is very small, another is very large. One is automated, another is manual. The one in the Bible Belt wants one kind of material and we in New England want another. As a result we are all pestering NLS with different needs, while at NLS the staff can see the whole scope of things. Here in Rhode Island many of our people complain that we do not have enough material with explicit sex. So we keep saying to NLS, "Give us some sex." I know from national meetings that much of the rest of the country is saying, "All you're giving us is sex, and we need more Bible stories." Until I got to talk with other librarians from other parts of the country at national meetings, I never really understood the scope of the problem.

How many librarians are in the intimate circle of people who are making decisions with regard to federal money? How many people with library backgrounds are on the staff of President Reagan today? Every influential person, whether a governor, U.S. senator, or a president, has been heard to say to a group of librarians, "I worked my way through college in a library and it was one of the great experiences of my life. I benefited so much." The speakers get a standing ovation, leave, and think, "I've satisfied this group of people for another four years." Some legislators have been helpful to us but I think that it is really a disadvantage that there has been no one from the profession who has really become involved in the political process, to the extent that he or she is part of the team. It does not have to be someone with an M.L.S.—just a person with librarianship or the workings of libraries at heart.

In the kind of work I do, I use the courses that I had in psychology much more than I use the ones I had in librarianship, because I am dealing with people day in and day out, trying to understand people, especially older people. The experience that I have had working with older people is much more valuable to me than my courses in library school. I have never counted but I would say that maybe 70 percent of our readers are over sixty-five. They will call and order books by number. They are not going to reel out the number but there will be pauses while they collect their thoughts. Or they may call and com-

pletely forget what they called about. This can be a traumatic experience. Most of these people are intelligent, they know that they made a mistake, and the worst thing that you can do is to make them feel as though a disaster has happened and that they disturbed you for no good reason. I have found that sometimes just by talking about something totally unrelated to what they called about I can give them a chance to remember why they called in the first place. And then they can hang up with a sense of accomplishment. And if they do not remember, I say, "When it comes back to you just call me back. I'll be here." I think that little things like this are very helpful, and I did not learn them in library school. I learned them in undergraduate psychology classes.

When I was in library school I was not given the opportunity to take courses in public relations, in generating enthusiasm through the use of the mass media. All we had were slide-tape presentations. The whole field of public relations has gone so far so fast that you have to know the little tricks of the trade. I have learned about this because on our advisory committee is the administrative assistant to the head of a local television station and he has taken us under his wing. Once he hears our problem it is as if a light bulb goes on in his head; he has all sorts of solutions. For example, we wanted to do some television spots emphasizing our cassette service. He arranged to bring a television crew to the library, where they spent the better part of the day filming for the ads. Then he gave me some tips on how to get ads shown. He said to me, "Always allow two months from the time that you persuade someone at the station to accept your piece until you get it on the air. The very best week to aim for is the week after Christmas, because you hit a lull. All the advertising for toys is out of the way; all the political campaigns are out of the say." Somebody in the library world must have known this. Something like this could have been told us in library school.

Press releases are important, too. When I first started this job, I used to write many press releases and no newspaper picked them up. Finally I asked a newspaperman about the problem. He looked at the press releases and said, "There are no quotes. Say the very same things but attribute them to somebody. Richard Leduc says 'boom'." It works like a charm. How was I to know what a newspaper wanted when it printed press releases? It does not even matter who you attribute the quotes to. Nobody at any of the newspapers ever heard of Richard Leduc!

For six months this man from the television station and a public relations person from another agency handled virtually all of our public relations. I was a machine and if they told me to bark, I would bark. I

did exactly what they said and for six months we got plenty of publicity. Unfortunately, they do not have the time to spend on this regularly and I have not had the time to pursue it in the way that I would like. These are the things that we, as librarians, should be doing. But if you do publicity for three days, you come back and you find out that you have fifty people with broken machines and a real backlog of book orders that need to be filled. Then you get into the day-to-day work and you are back at the beginning again.

I have been amazed at the amount of time that librarians spend talking to other librarians. It's not that I do not like my fellow librarians, but we are all convinced that library service is important, necessary, vital, and underfunded. We do not have to tell each other that. It is the rest of the world that has got to know it, yet the only time that it is really discussed is at library meetings. I think as a profession we are all conservative, including me. This is the union dues for being a librarian. If you are not conservative you are going to be ostracized when you look for a job. Change is taking place, but it is not entirely progressive change. We take three steps forward and then have to take another step backward before we can take another plunge forward again. There is constant improvement, but it is a gradual thing and more of a wavy line than a straight line. Our program does not take off, because we have to keep coming back, catching our breath, and convincing people in authority that what we did last week was really the right thing to do.

I do not think the problem is the motivation. I think much of it is the system, the bureaucratic system. We have to be able to function somehow within that bureaucracy. The person above us who is making the decisions is being pressured in many ways. At the same time that we are pressuring to change the program, expend some funds, do something a little bit innovative, the decision maker is being pressured by his superiors to cut the budget. So, very often when we want to do something we will get a negative answer, which is not a "No, I don't think you have a good idea," but a "No, I can't spend the money."

I become frustrated and try to do it another way. Either that or I throw up my arms and say, "They are just going to pay me to sit here and keep the chair warm all day." Sometimes I wish I had the independence to say, "It's just me that I'm thinking of, so I can quit. If I have to I can beg, borrow, and steal in order to support myself." But I just do not feel that way. I feel a certain responsibility. I can suffer, but I would hate to see my children suffer, so I control myself and say, "I'm going to try to propose this idea in a slightly different way."

Then I decide that with anything I can get my hands on I am going

to work to see that the best service possible goes out to the people. I know that we do not have the best possible service, but consider what we have to work with. I try to emphasize to the people who answer our phones that when a patron calls they should forget whatever problems they are dealing with, just give him all their attention for whatever time it takes. If the call keeps dragging on and the person is just looking for someone to talk to, after five minutes they are to try to end the conversation on an upbeat note. But, if the person really is looking for some kind of library service, let's give it to him. For instance, I do not know how many times on a Friday afternoon, on my way home from work, I leave here with an armful of books that I am going to mail at a post office. I go out of my way a bit and get them in the mail in the hope that some of the people will get books on Saturday and not spend a lonely weekend. It takes me three minutes longer than telling a person, "The mail doesn't leave here until early Monday morning." I think that it is important to a person whether he gets the books on Saturday or Monday. At least he knows that I have tried. The little things are what people are really looking for.

There is a person who keeps calling us and then calling our congressman to tell him how poor our service is. The patron needs a minimum of twelve new books a week, which have to be westerns or detective stories by male authors, read by male narrators. The books cannot mention foreigners, Indians, government agencies such as the CIA or KGB, or religion. "Send me twelve of these every week and if you send me one that doesn't meet these criteria I am going to yell, scream, and curse you." And he does. Every one of us from the director of the department on down has been ill treated by this individual. He does not even use polite language; it is all four-letter words!

In contrast, we served a person recently who, unknown to us, is the editor and publisher of a local newspaper. He just signed up the way everybody else does. After he had used the service for a few months I got a letter from him which thanked me and told me what his background was. Had we known that this person was in an influential position we probably would have been especially careful to make sure that he got good service. Here is a person with an editorial policy that could help us at some time, and what we did for him was what we try to do for all of our patrons, day in and day out. That was one of our happy moments recently. It was like having someone look over your shoulder for a while and then say, "You are doing a fairly good job."

In the kind of job that we do, unfortunately, we do not need someone who is unusually intelligent and creative. We need someone who can plod along each day to get us through the day. Granted, if a person

is creative and has ideas, we can use him, but mostly what we are looking for is someone who is able to provide people with the materials that they need and understand what the patrons are looking for, rather than someone who will be frustrated because he is a genuinely creative person and 90 percent of what he does on the job is very uncreative.

Ideally, handicapped people should be able to get any material that sighted people can get, instantly; also they should have emergency access to material as well. I would like to see a system in which materials are being broadcast twenty-four hours a day so a person who needs materials can just tune in. It might not be the book of that particular person's choice, but if he has run out of everything else he would have something to listen to. I have found myself in a hotel room, desperate to have something to read. I might go out in the hall and find a four-day-old newspaper and just read that, because there is nothing else available. There should be some additional access along those lines.

Rachel Ames
Subregional Librarian
Fayetteville, Arkansas

I quit my job as subregional librarian in 1978 because I could not afford to keep it. I went to work as a school librarian and then got a job as a waitress. That is the highest-paying job you can get around here for the amount of time that you spend doing it. I was waiting tables at a little hamburger restaurant and bringing home $298 every two weeks. As a waitress I was working about fifteen to twenty hours a week, and now I am working thirty-seven and a half hours, officially. Of course I usually take things home to work on, because there just are not enough hours in the day, but that work doesn't get me any credit. While I was waiting tables, one of the public librarians came in and told me that my successor had resigned. I called Mrs. Wright and she said, "Can you start tomorrow?" So here I am back again.

In one library school class we had a list of about thirty or forty different special libraries and we were supposed to choose one as the topic of a written and oral report. I chose talking books and for the oral part of the report I really shocked the students. I passed out all kinds of talking books and cassette machines, turned the lights out, and asked students to tell me what they had. In the dark they learned about talking books and they tried to get a cassette into the cassette player. I had blindfolded myself for twenty-four hours before the class and tried to get around in order to get a feeling of what blindness is like. That was the only preparation whatsoever that was available, the only mention of talking books the whole time I was in library school. If I had not picked that subject for my report, nobody in the class would have known anything about talking books.

I do not think it's a good idea, though, to have a specific program on talking books because there just are not many positions available. Financially it is not feasible. Also, many skills that we have are transferrable to other library jobs, and there is a tremendous amount of talking book knowledge that we are not going to get anywhere but on the job. I am on the Arkansas Library Association's continuing educa-

tion committee. Continuing education is a very strong point with me, and I really believe that the best place to learn about this program is in the workshops, through in-service training and actual hands-on experience workshops.

This subregional library was the first one in Arkansas, and in the beginning one staff person could do this job for a couple of hours a day. The circulation was so small that the mail could be carried in one person's arms to the post office. But last year we had a circulation of 24,000, not counting the machines that we mailed out. We now serve twelve countries and our funding comes to five cents a person. Right now we are working full time to serve about 460 active readers, and most talking-book readers read about ten times more than other people do, because they cannot do so many other things. I will probably get five more counties to serve in the next few months and I do not know who is going to pay for it. I myself would like to be paid more than $9,800 a year. My clerks get minimum wage and no benefits. I quit the job in 1978 because I could not afford to keep it. I could earn $1,200 more a year working in the school library, with school vacations and everything else. Salaries in public libraries all over this state are very low. My two years in talking books also make me the person in this state who has the most experience in this program. The person closest in experience is entering her ninth month in talking books. I am the most qualified, most experienced person here and I am just starting my third year in the business.

We will probably meet about 5 percent of our readers. Other than this 5 percent, we have to work with the information that is on their applications because we will never meet them in person. We have some correspondence with them and we send out a newsletter, but we will never meet the majority. This is how I try to get around that: We have an organization here called United Community Service and once a month we have a luncheon with a speaker from one of the services in the area. We publish a directory of services every year, and included in the group are people from the health service, the Red Cross, and Department of Human Services, community development, parks and recreation, and public schools. I go to those meetings with my aides and we just go over to a table where we do not know anybody and say, "I don't know you." By doing this we have started some cooperative arrangements, such as one with the Department of Aging, which has caseworkers who go out and check on people, some of whom are talking-book patrons. There are two visiting nurses associations and their nurses are out there, too, carrying talking-book applications in their bags. They reach those people who are homebound and do not

know about us. We use the people in United Community Service as our legs, and I have educated the librarians in the Ozarks regional system so that every public librarian in every small town now knows about talking books. I try to give the applications to people who work directly with the public in the libraries.

If I could afford it, I would rent a storefront or a big metal utility building. We also need about four times the shelving that we have now. I want better facilities and additional personnel, and if I had a blank check, I would start some sort of computerization.

We need to get out and visit all the nursing homes and we need to take applications and visit the eye specialists in the area. We sent a cassette machine to a woman in town and she cannot figure out how to use it. We should be able to run across town and show her how. But at this time our outreach is pretty much limited to the cooperation that we can get from other service organizations.

Of the main qualities that talking-book personnel should have, number one is patience and number two is flexibility. You are going to have to make up your own rules as you go along. You have to be a counselor, so I would think that courses in psychology and counseling would be of more benefit than special courses in talking books. Many times patrons call and they do not need anything, they just want someone to listen. They just want someone to talk to them and that is a big part of our job. We are not regular public librarians. A few weeks working as a bartender might be good preparation for our job. You have to be a counselor. I could not work without my directory of services. A young man who lost his hand in a machine at a local plant came in wanting to know if we knew anything about artificial limbs. We got him in touch with one of our readers, a fantastic man named Bill who is blind and has lost both his hands. I do not know what happened to Bill over in Vietnam. He used hooks for his hands and he always says, "If you ever see a blind man with two hooks for his hands in a room, run!" Bill is also a nationally known potter. He helped the young man over his bitterness and told him all that he needed to know. We use our people as resources, too. You have to use all the resources you have.

Everyone I know in this state who works in talking books is in it because of the people. That may not be why they started, but that is why they stayed. Patty Castille is one of my aides. She had three years of experience as a public librarian, six months in a public school and six months here at talking books. She's paid minimum wage. I do not know how long she can afford to keep the job. I am going to lose her. We are going to lose all of the staff, unless they love the work enough

to come back, as I did. As I said, I was earning more money waiting tables. My other aide is Carla and she has 112 hours of credit from the business college. Her experience includes working here as my aide and working as a library acquisitions clerk. She has training in computers and equipment such as memory typewriters. She also is earning minimum wage with no benefits.

Unlike some of the big places, we do not have a system in which the readers are split up and handled by readers' advisers. We all handle everybody and we all have our favorites. Robert is one of our walk-in patrons. He lost his wife this year and when he gets lonely, he comes in. He knows that we could mail him his books but he wants to come in and see us. The first time he came in was after we had been sending him what we call "safeties." Those are books for which the card does not say "sex" or "strong language." Robert came in and said to us, "You know, I may be old, I may be blind, but I'm not dead. Don't you have anything with sex in it?" Then one man, the opposite of Robert, sent us a note and he was outraged. I cannot even remember what book we sent him, but I thought it was a "safety." He just sent it back in outrage and said that it should be taken off the library shelves. He said, "It was worse than *Gone With the Wind!*"

We are the only outside contact that some of these people have, and they let us know their opinions. One lady almost always puts a note inside the book. One day I opened up a book and the note said, "This was a lovely book, a beautiful story." I opened up the next container that she had had and all it said was, "Rotten." Then we have one patron who is deathly afraid of water. She does not want anything in her books about water. When patrons send in their requests for books, we learn more about them than people who have known them for years do.

All in all I am very pleased with my crew. We have to work as a team. Everybody unloads mail bags. Everybody does everything, except that we all have our special jobs that we like to do.

I think that the main thing that we need is interaction with more people who are in this service. I wish that I had money to go to some of the conferences. I was just looking at the agenda for the Florida meeting and I notice that they have special times for "understanding the needs of talking-book patrons." That should definitely be on the agenda. They also have a time for "demonstration of new products for the blind." We covered that as best we could in the workshop that we gave for all the talking-book librarians in the state and their administrators. We had all the catalogues that we could find and our local Visualtek man and our local motorized wheelchair man spoke.

There is a saying about "getting sick of trying to do everything with nothing." It gets frustrating and sometimes I go out of here ready to scream. Most of the time we work straight through lunch hours, and we do not take breaks like everybody else in the world. We are not normal. We have posted cartoons in the room. In one of them Charlie Brown and Linus are talking about Lucy, who is in a really crabby mood. Linus puts up a sign to warn people because he feels that people should know when she is in a mood like that. We have those days, too. We have to have things like that around the room to keep us from climbing the walls.

It is very frustrating to have to take a cut in pay to do something that you love to do. I think we have some really good people in the state providing this service, but I do not know how long they can afford to keep doing it. It was worth it to me to come back because I was miserable as a school librarian. I hated to go to work in the morning. Now I like going to work in the morning. I am getting many more gray hairs this year, though.

Note: After the interview took place, Rachel Ames reported the following developments: (1) the library got permission from the board to hire one more full-time person; (2) the library is now serving seventeen counties, for an additional 250 readers; (3) the outreach program to nursing homes is in full swing; and (4) administrative support from the director, Mrs. Wright, has been essential.

Joyce Smith
Subregional Librarian
Huntsville, Alabama

Over the years I have always felt that there were many educated fools in the world, to be frank about it, and many people with enough parchment to wallpaper a wall who have no sensitivity and no empathy. They don't fit in. Maybe they don't fit in anywhere, but they especially don't fit into this program. I am not against education, but I think for this library service you need a special kind of person who is willing to go beyond the normal requirements of the job. Some people get very nervous and upset when they deal with handicapped people. Doing this takes a special feeling. The patrons become our friends and I think this is the hard thing about this program. Maybe we get too close to people. When they die we lose family because we are just so close to them. I go to many funerals, because these people are not just library patrons, or reader files, but they are real friends. I go to their meetings and I take them places. They come to my house.

When I was a Girl Scout in the seventh grade in Wisconsin, we entertained a troop of blind Girl Scouts from Chicago. That was my first experience in trying to describe things to somebody who couldn't see and I wasn't sure how to do it. We were walking on the beach, just skipping along and jabbering. We were having a great time and when the blind girls needed help they asked for it; we were not hanging on to them or anything. I remember our Girl Scout leader standing up on the beach screaming at us, "Watch out! Don't let them get hurt!" And I remember saying, "Oh, for Pete's sake, why is she so upset?" We had a really fun day together and the blind girls just seemed naturally to do the right thing. We didn't get all uptight about whether they might run into a picnic table and get hurt.

My schooling was in nursing. After I married and moved to Huntsville I became involved in braille transcribing through our church. At about that same time the law was changed to allow public libraries to open their own departments for the blind; they had not even coined the term subregional library. I read in the paper that our

local library director was going to Washington to find out about this change, so I wrote to him and asked if he needed any help in setting up the department. When he came back we had an interview and two weeks later I started working. He showed me an empty room and said, "How about it?" That was 1967 and we were the third public library in the nation to start a program. You've heard of "grandfather clauses"? Well, I'm grandma.

We began with twenty books on the shelf and many hopes and dreams. That was a really exciting time for me. We all felt that these people should have the same thing that other people in the community have, that is, they should be able to use their local public library and the library should have a book format that they could use. They should be able to call us and get help and they should be able to know somebody in their local community who can provide library services. These patrons, we thought, shouldn't have to write to some unknown person miles away, or get all their books through the mail. We didn't want them to be segregated that way. The fact that they are handicapped only relates to the format they use; it doesn't relate to service. They should not have to go somewhere else for library service. Since everybody else in Huntsville comes to this library, they should, too.

The director we had then was very forward-looking and he believed that when you get a federal grant to start something, that it was pump-priming money, and that you should not get dependent on it. He believed that we should figure out how to keep the program going when the federal money dried up. He is about the only administrator I have met in all these years who had that outlook. Everybody else has always been "grabbing what they can get" and letting things drop when the federal government stops paying for it. It's a pitiful thing to say to patrons, "This year you get service from us because we have a special grant, and next year it will end, so you'll get service somewhere else." These are people that we are bouncing around, not rubber balls. But back when we started, most people had this human aspect uppermost in their minds. Now too often they ask, "What is the bottom line? What is most cost effective?" They are losing their feeling for the people and they are saying, "Tough luck. It's none of our concern. We can't afford service."

We have comradeship with the patrons and with other librarians involved in this service; it is sharing a love of books. Years ago when I went to national conferences, the librarians involved in this service constituted a small group and we knew each other very well. The meetings were emotional. I see more and more of the new librarians who really do not care about meeting people, when it comes right

down to it. They are thinking only about money and position; they do not care about the patrons. It makes me very upset because I think that our people are losing out. The readers are not getting good service. People get so tied up with regulations and with "Are you sure this person qualifies for the service?" They are putting up stumbling blocks for people who already have enough stumbling blocks.

But the problem is really more than just the librarians; I think it's society now. People have this feeling that you get yourself into trouble if you go beyond the minimum required. Many people just don't care and are not willing to help each other. They ask, "What's in it for me?" All this is holding people back. I remember one time when I was in nurse's training. I was in surgery and I hesitated about something; maybe I didn't hand the doctor some instrument fast enough. I remember he screamed at me something that I have never forgotten: "If you make a mistake, make a mistake of commission. Don't make a mistake of omission." In other words, "Do it and if it's wrong, okay. But don't omit it." And that applies to service to the blind and handicapped. It all boils down to the fact that this service should not be seen as just a job, but as a major part of your life.

We got an increase in funds again this year, everything we asked for plus a sizable increase. Right now the decision makers are happy with the library—with the whole library program, not just us. As far as the subregional library goes, though, I don't know what will happen if there are federal funding cuts. When we started our service, we started with just the city of Huntsville; then when we knew what we were doing, we took on the county. Now we are serving seven counties with federal funds. If there are federal cuts we will have to justify serving outside the county with local appropriations. I hear this statement more and more frequently: "You know, Joyce, you can't serve outside the county with your local funds." I understand that. Some other librarians think that we are redundant; they do not see the point of subregional libraries anymore, since the regional library has a beautiful new building. But we contend that a regional, centralized mailing service is not the same as a local, personalized service. We have a free phone service and people come to Huntsville from the other counties because it is a shopping area and a financial focal point. As far as I am concerned, it would take the same amount of staff to serve one county as to serve seven. We need a basic book collection and whereas a pitiful public library branch should have around 10,000 titles, we are lucky to even approach that. We need to have the basic collection, as big as we can, no matter how many readers we have, in order to provide them with a good selection. The cost per person is less when

you add more readers, but I cannot seem to make people understand that. They just say, "You can't serve outside your county."

I am a firm believer that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but some people just are not fighters. The old stereotype librarian is the quiet, mousy type who doesn't do anything. Just because a rumor comes out that you are going to get a cut in funding, that does not mean that it is definite. If people would get excited and start pushing, things would go back in the budgets again. A couple of months ago we went to the capital to lobby for libraries. It was interesting, but you could just see the legislators looking at you and thinking, "Here comes another one." You do feel as if you've crawled out from under a rock the way they look at you sometimes. But, still that day they did say, "This is the first time that we've heard from libraries. In the future we'll pay more attention to libraries, because we are finding out for the first time that people are interested." People were concerned about libraries and they called their representatives. So we said, "How about that? They really do count the letters they get, they really do count the phone calls. They'll start listening because our people have responded. If we don't get out there and holler the legislators are not going to look out for us." It was an eye opener for me.

I think that attitudes toward the handicapped are changing, but there is still much resistance to programs like ours. The feeling is that our patrons are a burden on the ordinary taxpayer, that they are sitting around not contributing to society, not paying taxes. Ordinary people do not realize that many handicapped people are working, and working harder than many sighted taxpayers. I went to the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped several years ago on its twenty-fifth anniversary, and the speaker was Raymond Burr of "Ironside" fame. He was the son of a missionary in China. He talked about how the people in China would take handicapped children, put them in a basket, and put the basket on the mountaintop or dump it in the river. He said, "Parents are so shocked by that, but we're not so different here. It's just that in America we say, 'We'll give you this money and we'll give you these services, but please don't make us look at you.' "

I think he was right. I go to restaurants with my blind friends and the waiters still talk to them through me. It is a slow educational process, but sometimes I feel as if I have to take people and hit their heads against the wall to make them realize. We have local committees on employment of the handicapped, but there are still many people who do not understand why we have them. We were screaming about a ramp for the new courthouse and complaining about the doors there,

which were too heavy for a person in a wheelchair to open. One of my friends who is on the mayor's committee and is as emotionally involved in these things as I am was discussing the subject at a cocktail party in the midst of the courthouse problem. Somebody looked at her, puzzled, and said, "Why are you so upset? Why would people in wheelchairs want to go to the courthouse anyway?" My friend asked, "Why do *you* go to the courthouse?" The person answered, "Well, to pay my taxes and. . . ." "Why do you think they want to go there?" asked my friend.

It's a shame that Americans are still so shortsighted, but we are. Many people are amazed that we have readers here who are totally blind and working as engineers with the NASA space program. They are working just like everybody else and doing a great job. I do not think that anybody respects a fence-sitter. You get shot at from both sides, so I say what I think and hope it will do some good.

A woman called the library yesterday, all excited that she had been accepted to go back to school. She had just been through a messy divorce and had lost her self-image, so she was unsure about going back to school. Long before she had been married she was getting talking books from us. She called initially several months ago and talked to me about going back to school and her feelings of uncertainty about being accepted. I gave her some advice about going to adult education and taking some brush-up courses, and we talked about the options that she had. And then she called yesterday to say, "Guess what? I've been accepted!" She was so sure that they would take one look at her and say, "No, we don't want you."

Other patrons call about medical problems and where they can get this and that. They would not go to a reference librarian, although they would likely get the same answers about vocational rehabilitation or ophthalmologists or job training. They are not going to walk up to a perfect stranger, pour their hearts out, and leave themselves open and vulnerable. In this service, over the years, people have come to know us and we have built up a trust relationship. They will turn to us and they will ask for help on all sorts of things that might be very embarrassing. We don't necessarily have the answers, but often we can find the person who does and call up that person and say, "I'm sending so and so over. Can he come right now?" So often our patrons, more than other people, fall through the cracks and get bounced from agency to agency, working with professionals who operate strictly within their job descriptions. We give the patrons confidence because too often they say, "I'm not going to bother. I have to go face another stressful situation and I might be rebuffed." We have to be worthy of their trust,

too. You blow it once and that's it, just as in any human relationship.

These people are not going to call the regional library with their questions, even if that's where they get their books. I am convinced that they are not going to because they do not know the people at the regional library. They haven't met them. I think that subregional libraries are serving an important function and it is too bad that anybody is even questioning them, much less closing them down. We should be there and we should be helping the people. You still have to serve the people where they are. You can see this in the growth of subregional patronage: within the first year of operation the number of patrons usually doubles or triples. In the neighboring two counties, people are upset by the prospect of maybe having to go back to the regional library for service, if federal funds are cut. A couple of the patrons have said, "They're different people. They're in a different part of the state and they think differently." Patrons don't want to go there even if they do have a fancy building and a fancy telephone service and a fancy computer, so some of our people started writing letters to that effect. Our director got a phone call from some important people who said, "Can't you control Joyce? She is getting these people to write letters." My director said, "No, I can't. In fact, I'm encouraging her."

No matter how you improve a regional library, no matter how good it is, you are still not serving your local people there. You have a moral responsibility to serve all your taxpayers, and, by gosh, these handicapped people are taxpayers, too.

In this job you have to be prepared for anything and everything. You have to work hard and you can't be afraid to get your hands dirty or your clothes filthy. We don't dress up around here because we get so grubby, packing up talking book machines and everything. You just have to do everything, but at the same time you get to do so much. You do not push a button and check a book out, you get to know the people. I've really grown in this service and I have reaped benefits beyond anything I've put into it, believe me. People in other parts of the library think, "How dull!" But can you imagine cataloguing all your life? What a challenge it is when people call in, either to chew you out for a book they didn't like, or to say, "What a wonderful book you sent me." And many times that wonderful book was not at all what they put on their request list. Many of our users here think they just want religious books. Many of them are not reading people, so when they get into the talking books it may be the first time in their lives that they have been exposed to literature. We experiment and gradually introduce them to new things. Some people will call up and say, "You ought to ban that book from the library!" But then somebody else

will call up and say, "Forget about all those little old ladies! Remember this X-rated young man. Send me some dirty books."

One of our patrons was the brother of Richard Chase, who wrote the *Grandfather Tales,* and he looked just like Colonel Sanders. He was always doing something, like riding a three-wheel bicycle down the yellow stripes on the road, because that was what he could see. He cornered me at an ACB meeting after I had sent him *Couples,* our first really racy book. He said, "I thought I was a man of the world and knew what other people did. But I didn't know that people did some of those things in that book!" I said, "Gee, I didn't want to offend you. Don't finish reading it. Send it right back." It took about three weeks before that book came back, and we figured that he must have memorized it. He was so much fun. For instance, when we had a swim party, I decided to take him along. He must have weighed three hundred pounds and was seventy-eight years old at the time. He came out in these wild purple swimming trunks and jumped into the pool saying, "Women and children to the high ground!" Other times we often got into long discussions about books.

When I go and look at the circulation desk in the regular part of the library, I don't see any of the staff discussing books with the patrons. I just see them talking about overdue fines or snapping at each other. I don't see how they can get any real joy from their work.

When we have new staff members, I try to teach them as much as I can, in case I get run over by a truck or something. I encourage them to read all our material on blindness and handicaps because I think that people must be willing to educate themselves if they are going to absorb the material. People can sit through every course that could possibly be offered and it would be like any other course—they do it to get a grade and then get out of there. When you teach yourself because you want to learn, that's when you really absorb the knowledge.

Robyn Foreman
Librarian
Washington State Regional Library

Stereotypes exist not only about library patrons but about librarians as well. At Minnesota, where I went to library school, the whole philosophy was centered on breaking the stereotypes about librarians. It was our feeling there that you should surprise people, jump over the reference desk and yell a lot. (I'm being facetious!) We graduated a number of people who are all over the place, state librarians and prominent people, and they have broken the stereotype. Part of the role of library school should be to produce librarians who will go out and break the librarian stereotype to that patron who looks across the desk and thinks how lovely it would be to be a librarian and read books all day.

I think role changes are all wrapped up with the concept of libraries becoming more information sources than resources, and becoming less archival. In my case, people come into this library, find out what I'm like, and say to me, "What are you doing here?" I tell them that I'm not very competitive. My friends say that I should be in sales, but in sales there would be too much competition for me. I feel that I have helped to break the stereotype of the typical librarian. I think that recruitment to the profession will grow as we change, as more accidental cases get into library school, as we become library school directors, and as we philosophize that stereotype away. With our actions out in the field we can recruit others to go to library school for different reasons. Stereotypes change on a "one candle in the dark" basis.

I believe, philosophically, that people who cannot use regular print have to get their information somewhere. They miss about 90 percent of what's going on, and if I am going to be out in the world among them, I want to make sure that they are getting that information. The most frustrating part of my job is our inability to serve everybody or to serve people with the level of quality that we would like to. In terms of my own professional growth I am very interested in management. I like being in a place where I can make things happen and I never thought I

would find that in a library. Management may be confusing much of the time, but it is interesting, and throughout our job is the philosophy of providing books and information to people who cannot read regular print. It is a good business and it is worthwhile. You get your kicks on all sides.

Lowell Martin
Professor Emeritus
Columbia University

The interest here is particularly in service to the blind and physically handicapped. Some of these people may be highly educated, while others may have limited education. They are like other individuals. In any case, I believe that the potential for broadening people who are blind and physically handicapped has been particularly great. If the resources are available and if there is competent staff to help them locate the resources, the library is a particular boon to that group of people who are short on some other experiences. Using the library is a way for them to catch up and move ahead. While I have no direct experience in service to the blind and physically handicapped, I have noted this potential in studies of a dozen or more libraries around the country and I have thought to myself, "How can we make the total resoarces more available to this particular group? How can we plan for and orient ourselves more toward them, the way we have planned for and oriented ourselves toward readers in subject fields and children as a particular group of individuals? How can we relate to this group?"

I have no easy answers, but I believe that almost any library of any size should serve people who can read print and people who cannot read print. The library also should serve the physically handicapped who cannot customarily get into our buildings. I keep thinking of handicapped individuals as neither better or worse, neither more interested in development nor less interested in development than others. And certainly in libraries of some size I picture a time when there would be some braille material, some talking books, and staff who know these resources so that handicapped individuals in that area would not go off to some special and remote place, but to their local library.

Now this vision is still in the future, but I do not know that it would take millions of dollars to make it a reality. It would take some funds and it would take some investment on the part of many librarians to do this. It is not beyond reason. There would be a real payoff, or dividend,

would there not? It would involve materials and space and other practical things, but I don't know that we are talking of huge resources.

I also hope for staff members who would feel comfortable with persons who are blind or physically handicapped, who would not have any hang-ups or preconceptions that would get in the way of serving them. Here again, I don't think that it would take a revolution to accomplish this, but it would take some attention.

I find myself resisting the idea that the change I hope for is primarily or exclusively in the hands of the newer and younger librarians. I am just now interviewing the heads of the subject departments in my current study of San Francisco Public Library. In one way or another all these individuals are saying that they want to and are trying to get closer to their users in a professional relationship. Now when it comes to these department heads in relation to the blind and physically handicapped, I think if you said, "Wouldn't you like to do that also for the blind and physically handicapped?" a preconception would come into the picture. I am guessing now that their answers would be, "Oh, I don't think we're able to do that. I don't think we are qualified." Of course, they may not have the material, but I think that in addition they would hold back and wonder if they were able to serve the handicapped.

I believe that both the experienced person and the younger person who is entering the field could without difficulty be exposed to some handicapped people. At present most of us have limited contact with handicapped people. I have observed people in the library field and outside who have had some contact, and after a short time they will say, "My goodness, what was I so concerned about? We are getting alone just fine. We are communicating." The sighted person who started out very uptight about how this was going to work out, within a family or in a community or in a library, hardly thinks about it after a while. The handicapped person is just another person who perhaps instead of being bald, has another characteristic. I hope that I am not being unduly idealistic, but I think the potential is there for some libraries, and that exposure would help to put things on an even, human basis.

My observation is that the people who are attracted to library school fall into several distinct categories. They come with certain mindsets, and are headed in certain directions by the time they get into their twenties. One of these groups has a general community and educational interest. In my most recent period at Columbia we had a general class that began to channel people, or respond to their interest; it happened to be called "the library in the community." There were

students who could not have been tied up and taken forcibly to this class, but it was always filled with people who were strongly motivated in this direction. When they came to the class they brought with them their own backgrounds. If they happened to come from a minority background they were strongly concerned about minorities, and if they happened to come from an upper-middle-class background they probably thought, "That's where I want to do this kind of thing." We purposely went to different sections of the city, talked to the parish priest, visited the social center, and spent some time at the library. They were flexible enough to see that "what we are learning applies to these groups also."

Now I am going to make a confession. I did not find a way to get those students into direct contact with blind and handicapped people. This task proved to be difficult, and maybe I was not ingenious enough to work it out. We did have a unit in the course dealing with handicapped people and occasionally I would be able to have a blind person come to class to talk, but it was not common. The students' response was often quite positive to the needs for and possible satisfactions of serving the handicapped. Many had a positive attitude.

Although I don't know all the library schools in the country, I doubt very much whether many of them give even occasional attention to blind and physically handicapped people. I guess it is possible to go through library school and never hear anything about them. However, I do not favor the idea of trying to set up one or two locations in the country that would have programs narrowly focused on services to the handicapped. My observation of those more narrowly focused programs is that they often are quite thin and limited in themselves as a branch of study. Furthermore, we are not really dealing with people having basically different motivations, interests, aspirations, or problems. We are talking about a physical characteristic that affects their lives.

The good library education program stresses the relationship between the library, its resources, and its users, including the blind and physically handicapped. The handicappee are part of the library's community, and the schools could do more to highlight the fact that these people are a part of that community. I would not like to see them served altogether separately, because I think that separation would result in a smaller number of library units for this group. I would favor a much larger number of places where they can get service in their communities, I hope.

So many of our public libraries are experiencing problems with money that it is going to be harder to provide additional needed service. But there is an obverse side to this coin. I think many public

libraries have developed and added activities and services without reflecting much about how important these activities are for the central priorities of the library. The shortage of funds is forcing attention to "what are we really here for?" This could be a positive development and there could be positive results.

The next step is, will libraries place service to the blind and physically handicapped among their priorities? Or will they, not doing very much about it now, do no more, or do less? When the subject is brought up, I find that public library administrators have not closed their minds to the possibility of putting this service among their priorities. Maybe the reason the door is ajar is that in the country in general we have become more attentive to this group. I almost feel as if the handicapped used to be in the closet, and now they are out. Maybe because of these changes I find that some administrators are expressing interest in seeing how they could improve their service to the blind and physically handicapped.

If the moment comes when they really mean to accomplish something rather than just talking and setting vague objectives, I believe it would not be difficult to use some form of continuing education. I am not suggesting a postgraduate program of many years to orient librarians to the existence of handicapped people, and to their general needs which are like the needs of others, and to their special needs. The task is not such a large order. Once it is accomplished, the library could begin to have persons on the staff who could help carry out this priority to serve the handicapped. Any priority you establish is worthless unless there is somebody to carry it out. Once this one is established, it will not be too hard to get people to carry it out.

A little earlier I said, "You've got to have the resources." I want to clarify what I meant to say. Certainly a fair part of the reference service of libraries, by telephone and in person, can apply to the blind and physically handicapped. The reference librarian provides information for a person. What difference does it make whether that person can see or not? If the communication occurs, you have provided service. Even without braille materials and other things, you can draw on your collection to serve a handicapped person. So you do not have to wait for the new forms of materials to arrive before you can serve these people—although an adequate program would have those materials in the special forms most needed by the local people.

I have the old-fashioned notion that reading and the use of other media constitute for everybody a window to see beyond their own limited room, their life and what it has been. Esthetic enjoyment comes to you through reading. You can also gain practical competence

for your job, for running your home, or whatever. Millions of people have used reading for these purposes. The public library remains very necessary to a whole range of people, from the child who has just learned to recognize the words on the page to the oldest person, including the blind and physically handicapped. Reading is as much a window and door, if you prefer to use that figure of speech, to unsighted persons as it is to us. Through reading we all learn about that which our limited vision and handicaps prevent us from seeing and reaching.

Part Three
The Library School Students

The library school students were asked to describe their motivation for wanting to become librarians. They were then asked to comment on the public service orientation of their fellow students and whether they thought that there would be much interest in library school courses on serving the blind and physically handicapped. The students were then asked to picture themselves in the library situation they would hope to be in after graduation and what they would do in that situation if a blind or handicapped person walked in and needed service.

Many of the students' answers were incomplete or confusing and thus were not included. Other comments that the students had that added to the overall picture of the current library school climate or the attitudes of library school students today have been included in some cases.

This section begins with some thoughts from two practicing librarians, also attending library school, that are directed toward library school students.

Eileen Keim
Regional Librarian
Concord, New Hampshire

I think that the most effective tool in this field, the one that involves both what you bring to and what you get from library school, is the concept of the reference interview. It involves the ability to talk with people, negotiate with them, and discover what their situation really is and how you and the library can help them. When you think of it, this is as important to the process of supervision as it is to the process of information giving.

Library school programs are still entry-level, and for the most part I believe they should be, since otherwise "late bloomers" like me would be shut out of the field. We have a great need for continuing education, however, and as a profession we have tried to meet this in a piecemeal manner. The library schools have not helped much.

I believe that the established library schools could step forward here. In the current job market it is criminal for them to continue to produce the maximum number of entry-level professionals. I would like to see some graduate program have the courage to deemphasize its master's program and emphasize continuing education through—dare I say it?—correspondence courses. This approach would not only benefit the profession greatly, but I think it would also be a good way for schools to remain close to their graduates, no matter what their geographical location.

Should library schools add courses on handicapped people and services for them? What makes handicapped people so different that they need to be covered in special courses? They get enough separation in other aspects of life and I would like to see more integration. Also, when you consider how many handicapped organizations would be delighted to step in for a class hour or two to present an awareness program or an informational program, it seems wasteful to divert expensive faculty away from their other areas of expertise.

Also, it is important not to confuse librarianship with social work, and to emphasize the solid skill courses. If librarians do not have

concrete skills and a firm grasp of the tools of their trade, no amount of being sensitive will get the job done. And if a librarian is a rigid person who is not willing to learn from the people he or she is working for, no amount of sensitivity training will help. Inflexible people will not do well in most settings, whether in a specialized field like this or in a general public library setting.

Above all, I would urge library school students to keep growing and to realize that anything they learn today is likely to be totally obsolete in five years. They should remember also that the world owes us nothing, that as educated Americans we are among the luckiest 10 percent of the people in the world. We are the ones with the debt.

It was about five years ago that I looked up one day and said, "I could be technologically obsolete before I can retire!" We who are in specialized areas of librarianship need to make a special effort to reach out and maintain our awareness of the rest of the profession, lest we burrow so far into our own little trenches that they turn into our graves.

Patricia Kirk
Regional Librarian
Massachusetts

If you put yourself in an administrative situation and subject yourself to the stress, you had better be prepared to do a little homework. But I think that the average library school student receives very little focus on administrative problems, and what is taught is so general as to be unhelpful. In this particular case—administration—the problem is not as specific to regional libraries as it is to the whole field of library science.

The one course that was offered in library administration did not quite hit what I needed to know. Part of the problem with regional libraries particularly, but often also with subregional libraries, is that quite often you are the only librarian on staff. All of sudden, no matter what your background has been and how comfortable you are with so-called library issues, you have to know all there is to know about budgeting, management, personnel, building maintenance, ramps, and the NLS system, which is complicated enough in itself. You have to deal with administrations which for some reason or other are not really sure why you are there anyway.

The situation is very awkward for somebody who probably did not think about becoming a library administrator when he or she was in library school. A few people plan to be directors from the start, but most of us do not. Instead we get involved in something that really sparks us, such as academic cataloguing. It is great to have those library skills, but I find that most of the things that I use every day in a regional library are much more related to business school than to library school. You do not get business skills in library school. The planning process, needs assessment, all hat happens in the upper echelons of ordinary libraries all over the world are things that we need to know about. Most of the people who go into library systems work their way up; they have had somebody tutoring them along the way. Very few people end up being dropped into the situation with no preparation, as we often are in blind and handicapped services.

What I am trying to say is that the things that I needed to know I have had to find out on my own. There is nothing wrong with continuing education, adult education, but it is not the kind of thing that happens in the ordinary routine of things. It is a real training problem. I think management is a particularly important facet of training right now because libraries are under such heavy fire financially, on all fronts. It is not just regional libraries that have to justify themselves anymore; I think everybody has to.

You have to know certain things, such as span of control, and all the terms that everybody throws around. You are talking about balance sheets and trying to read the budget print-outs when you do not have even a basic idea of accounting principles. There are many librarians like me who did not spend much time dealing with mathematics in their younger days. Even reading simple reports was a real struggle for me, and trying to make sense of comparative data between libraries is something that we have to do every day, to figure out where we stand. Everyone has to find a way of dealing with that problem. I think management training is one of the greatest needs for regional librarians, simply because people are usually out there on their own. We are not training librarians to be managers.

Service to the blind and physically handicapped is the kind of subject that, if it was mentioned at all in library school, was mentioned in the half-hour film orientation to the Library of Congress. There may have been something in that movie about library services to the blind and handicapped, but I do not really remember it. I worked as a reference librarian, and I worked as a children's librarian, but I was not really aware of the program until I had a child who was eligible for services. I think that librarians have the same problem that other people do. The program just sort of doesn't sink in until you have to deal with it.

If outreach had been an option and a course of study when I was in library school, I would have taken it. It gets you out of the office, you meet interestino people, and you are doing something that is above and beyond reading the card catalogue to someone. Outreach contributes more and has more meaning than sitting behind a desk and answering questions.

I cannot imagine how people learn all they need for outreach services. They have to know how to drive a truck! They have very specific selection problems, just as we do, and there are many things that are very common areas. They have trouble getting the handicapped on their bookmobiles; we have trouble getting them into our libraries. And now with all of the homebound programs I see much

overlap in services. Certainly with these programs and with the growth of the subregional libraries and with all kinds of deposit collections in public libraries, I believe library school students should be interested in learning more about these resources. So I go talk to the library school classes. I take my dog and pony show and go through the whole routine about who we are and where we come from, who uses us and who cannot use us. But although I do this many times, I still cannot speak to every class. It would be great if we all had public relations people on staff who would go out and do this on a regular basis.

One of the biggest problems with library conventions is that apart from the regional library conventions themselves, you never see anybody else at conventions who is doing what you are doing. You never end up talking to anybody who has the vaguest clue as to what you do, and you spend your whole time in convention like a missionary. You are out there spreading the word. I come back from conventions exhausted because I have had to explain what I do to everyone I meet. Even when you get involved in workshops this happens. Last year I talked on voluntarism in libraries at the Oregon Library Association convention, along with people from public library settings. After the session there was a crowd around me and I held a mini-session on what the library for the handicapped is all about. They said, "I didn't even know you existed." I do not know how many times you can say it, and how many things you can do, and how obvious you can be, because there is so much turnover within our field that you just can't win. Even when people do remember what you do, they do not remember how it works and all of the basic details. So more mention of this program in library school would make my job easier.

The other thing that I find about conventions is that there are not many meetings that have to do with administration. So you do not learn anything specialized about what you are trying to do, and you certainly do not learn anything about how to solve the problems that you face. You just spend your whole time working hard to explain what services for the blind and physically handicapped are.

I believe it would be more helpful if the national meetings of librarians for the blind and physically handicapped came more often. We all feel as if we are the Lone Ranger, but we are not. When we all get together, everything is fine. "I know exactly what you're talking about!" You do not feel quite so crazy, quite so paranoid, as you do when you are back home by yourself. And now, back home, I am looking for miners' lamps. You don't happen to know a source for miners' lamps? We have several tunnels in this library. I think that we need to laugh at ourselves a bit sometimes. I think part of our problem

is that our patrons always approach us in a serious tone, or almost always, and everything is always a crisis. I think if we could loosen up a bit maybe, we would be more creative.

Lynn Stainbrook
Recent Graduate
University of Wisconsin Library School

I remember that when I first started working in the library of the school for the visually handicapped, I had one student who had been run over by the motor of a boat. Her face was badly scarred and she had brain damage and eye damage as well. I remember thinking, "Oh, my God, she is so very badly scarred." I should add that I did not know at the time what had happened to her, but I thought that the child looked horrible, and I was horrified. Then a few months later someone told me the story of this girl, saying, "One of our students was extremely bright at one time. Unfortunately, her father can barely look at her now because he feels guilty about the fact that he ran a motor over her face." And all the things that had happened to her came out, plus the fact that her parents never came to visit her at the school. And I remember thinking, "Who is this student?" And on hearing the name of the student I remember saying to myself, "I don't remember her being very badly scarred." And then the next time I saw her I thought, "You know, when you first started working here, you did think she looked terrible. You hated to look at her." Somewhere along the line I stopped looking at this face and started looking at the person. I did not even remember that she was scarred.

So I think people can become more sensitive, if that's what is involved. I tell the story to other people. I think that you can grow and that once you start to really know a person, the fact that the person has a false eyeball and that he can pop it in and out of his eye, or whatever, is not going to disgust you anymore. You can grow. I think also that I was young and prepared to grow, and that some people maybe would not be so open to growth.

Sue McDonough
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

I realize that many handicapped or disadvantaged patrons have problems obtaining material. This has been dramatically illustrated to me by my great aunt, who for the last seven years has been blind. She gets tapes and large-print books, and from what I understand, the fact that she is able to obtain these materials helps her with her life.

Anne Brown
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

I think sensitivity training for students that would make them more aware of the needs of the handicapped is useless. My background is in psychology, and I have had sensitivity training. Such training does no necessarily change people. And if it is a requirement, something that students have to do, then it is definitely not going to change them or make them more aware of the handicapped. Training and sensitivity groups are not going to have any effect unless the person is motivated, and I do not know how many people are going to be motivated into serving the handicapped.

Another point is that the people who are good at working with people are going to be able to work with anybody. But I think that the people who are really good in any field, in any skill, are going to be relatively rare. The problem is, what are you going to do with the rest? For some people their jobs are real callings, in the true sense of the word "vocation." I don't feel that I have this calling to library school. I think there are people who really do have callings to this profession, but I do not know many of them.

Lynn Prime
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

If I were having a story hour and a handicapped child came in, it wouldn't bother me at all. Thinking about it beforehand would be more frightening than the actual event. When I walk down the street in Berkeley I think I'm more uncomfortable passing handicapped people that I do not know, in the public eye, than I am when I walk into a room full of people with some disability. I think I deal with situations better when I am actually faced with them. I did some volunteer work right after high school with a center for handicapped children. My sister had minimal brain damage, so when we went through a program with her we met many handicapped children. When I was only sixteen I met a roomful of one hundred children with brain damage of one kind or another. Before I went, I spent months agonizing over doing this and being embarrassed. What would I think? What would I do? Once I walked into the room, it just ceased to be a problem.

I am twenty-three years old and on the very young end of the scale here. There are many people in library school who are around thirty, I suppose. I feel very young and inexperienced. I am over my head right now. So many of the people that I meet here have strong opinions and are very political, which is wonderful. They are very vocal and I'm not used to that. It's actually one of the most frightening things about library school. I can muddle through the things that I don't understand and can't do, but I find budget concepts and the political processes very frightening.

Esther De La Rosa
Library School Student
San Jose State University

What would I like to see in ten or fifteen years? Let the world still be here, with the air still breathable and the water still drinkable. I would like to see more sensitivity, since we are talking about people who are handicapped. I think that the Special Olympics is doing a wonderful job in bringing an awareness that handicapped people can achieve and they are proud. I get choked up about that. I wish that more people would see that the handicapped are people, too. They may not be able to jump as you do, or maybe they cannot even see as you do, but they are unique people and they are just as good as you are. They have the same rights as you do because they are human beings, and they are human beings on your level, not below. The problem is ignorance, and ignorance breeds fear. We are afraid of handicapped people, for different reasons.

Librarians can help to change that. For Cinco de Mayo I will be talking for a period of three days to six classes of high school students. I will start off talking about cultural differences—how to get to know each other and learn a little bit about our different cultures—because many children have asked, "Why are we celebrating Cinco de Mayo?" "This is why we're celebrating it," I tell them, "because if you understand why I do things you don't have to think that they are bad things. You will learn that I grew up with certain ways of doing things. I didn't learn how to use a knife and fork until I was out of high school, because the tortilla was the big thing." It's ignorance that keeps people prejudiced.

So how does the library fit into this? If I can celebrate Cinco de Mayo I also can have, during the Special Olympics time, a big spread on everything that I can think of related to the handicapped. I can have the classes come in again and have them be sensitized on that subject. That's how libraries can help.

I have been with the school district in San Jose for eleven years, and for nine of those years I taught English. I love high school students and

in my dreams I always wanted to be the librarian at the high school. I knew it would never happen, though, because there were eleven librarians in the district versus hundreds of teachers. I would have to be in the right place at the right time, and luckily I was. I did not have any courses in librarianship, but the principal asked me if I wanted the position because he was looking for a bilingual librarian and there was none to be found. He trusted me and I said yes. Jean Wichers, a professor at the library school here, gave me the confidence to accept the job. I was very scared because I knew that people would say I was a "token Mexican." The other librarians would never be rude. They are very nice people, but I am sure they would think, "How did she get the position? She doesn't even have a master's yet." But, this is my second year as librarian, and I am finishing library school this semester.

First of all, I love the students. Many people think that teenagers are at a very difficult age. They are, but I love them and feel confident that I am really helping them. When I get up in the morning I am so excited about coming here that sometimes I forget that I am going to work. And this is after eleven years. I would be burnt out by now if this were just a job. I love serving the students and I love being a role model for my people. When Spanish-speaking people come in and I can speak with them in Spanish, I can help them. I also feel that they are looking at me—they know I'm Chicana—and thinking, "If she got there, maybe I can get there someday." That's important.

We have handicapped children at our school and we have had to widen the library aisles so that wheelchairs have access. We also have many students who are slow learners and I love to help them, too. My own daughter is retarded and handicapped, and I really hope that someday a teacher will love her as much as I love these children. When they come in, I feel really good about it and think maybe they feel my warmth toward them. There is one boy who is hydrocephalic like my daughter. Usually he comes in and puts his head down, or if he gets something, he runs out with it. The other day he finally said a couple of words to me. Now he has started to communicate with me.

You don't learn warmth; it comes from suffering. My child was not given three months to live, then she was not given six months to live, and here she is five years old. I have suffered much with her and you gain something from having gone through so much pain. I can't say that that's the only reason, because I have always had a special place in my heart for the underdog. My mother would say, "That's because we're the underdogs." My mother used to say things like, "If you want something, go to a poor guy, don't go to a rich guy." We need people in this profession who have a heart for the underdogs.

We have orientation sessions at the high school. I think that through these sessions, the students get to know much about the personality of the librarian. I have a suggestion box and I say, "Tell me what you want and if it's feasible we'll get it." This was the first time the students had been asked for their input, and they couldn't believe it. I had planned a trip for book buying, and I said, "I'll take some of you with me." And they said, "You're letting us go? You're letting us choose books?" And I said, "I need help!" I keep the communication lines open like that and the students are really contributing.

If there were a course offered here in library school on working with the blind and physically handicapped, we would all need to take it. I think a course like that should be required. The most important thing to learn is not to be condescending, which I have learned from my own background. I feel that I was handicapped in a way just from my background. I feel like saying, "Don't be condescending with me!" Many people do not know that and they do not know that they are being condescending. It's just that they have been allowed to act that way. It's not a matter of taking much training; it's a matter of learning about the different problems of handicapped people. When my little "carrot top," a boy in a wheelchair, first came into the library and the desks were all close together, he said, "How do you expect me to get through there?" And I said, "You're right. You should have told me this at first. I'm a little slow." Then we had a good laugh. And my girl on crutches needed more space, too. I learned this just being on the job. If you want to be a librarian, you should want to serve people and be sensitive to their needs. All it took was for that student to tell me about the desks and I learned. I didn't have to sit through a class.

Debbie Martin
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

I think that there are many people who would take special courses on services to the handicapped because they are tradition and service oriented. But there are others who say, "Isn't it wonderful to be a librarian, but why are there jobs where you start out at $14,000 and you have to have several degrees and languages?" The world out there says that I need more money than that to live on. Librarians are professionals, but they are not making any money. Maybe working around money in a bank changed me somehow, but I'm basically practical. I came back to school so I could be trained for a job, and that kind of thinking seems to go with special libraries people more than with public libraries people. The people that I see in my public libraries class are obviously not concerned with money or they would not be going into public libraries. Those are the people that are still going to take those courses on the handicapped. They are service oriented and the whole issue of "We're here to meet everyone's information needs" is not even questioned. But in my special libraries class, it's "Come on now, let's be practical. There is just so much money. You can't do everything for everybody." I see this split, and I am somewhere in the middle.

Tom Simpson
Library School Student
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Several years ago, before I was in library school, I was a social worker in a reform school. I went from that, with a certain amount of "burnout" but also with a sense of positive calling, into an Episcopal seminary. During my time in the seminary I thought about myself a great deal, which that situation tends to force you to do. One of the results of my introspection was a serious question about whether I really wanted to be a priest. So I took a leave of absence from the seminary and made some intensive vocational analyses. My fantasy had to do with something that might be called a creative ombudsman. Bear in mind that I was, until this point, a virtual nonuser of libraries. I was also one of those people who assume that librarians are there to keep the books dusted and to make sure that everybody is quiet. With this level of ignorance I started fantasizing about the kind of service that would help people to get in touch with the resources that they needed to do what they wanted to do. Then I went about trying to find out if there was any current service that was close to that. To my great surprise I found that's what good reference librarians do—and I emphasize *good* reference librarians. So I ended up pursuing that field, initially with a focus on information and referral because my social work background was my first connection with librarianship. I have not lost my interest in information and referral, but I have broadened it to adult services and reference.

The librarians and library school students that I've met in library school are not the most articulate people in the world. Perhaps I am unfair, but I believe that you can't be public-service minded without being articulate. Public service demands an ability to communicate. You've got to be able to listen to what people are saying and you've got to be able to articulate to them what you have to offer in response to their needs. And there aren't many people that I've encountered who have that ability. They seem more oriented toward organizing information and preparing it for dissemination. Philosophically, I have

some problems with trying to change people who are now in librarianship. To a certain extent you can, but it depends on how deep-rooted their approach is and how much a part of their character it is. There's nothing wrong with being an inarticulate person. The problem is, is that the kind of person who can get librarianship out of its shell? I think that the only way to get the profession out of its shell is to attract the articulate, public-service-oriented person into librarianship. Some steps are being taken to do that, but in a very roundabout way. The public relations effort is to change the image of librarianship in general. This might awaken some people like me who would never have thought that this field would interest them. The trouble is that the public relations campaign is not really reaching the right people in high school and college who might otherwise form a pool of creative talent. I think that the challenge falls on library schools to look at the whole range of potential students and decide what kind of people they are looking for, not just to improve the reputation of the schools, but to serve the profession.

The program here is a one-year program, and it's been a major frustration for me not to be able to take a number of courses that I would otherwise have wanted to take in preparation for my career. In all honesty there is a real likelihood that were a course on special services for the blind and handicapped offered I would not take it. I am a firm believer in lifelong learning, though, and I hope to leave here at least with a personal program for continuing education. In that context I would take the course later if it were available.

I think I am getting much more out of library school because I am thirty-four and have had some time in the big, bad world. I also think I would get much more out of continuing education after I've had some professional experience. One thing that exasperated me when I was in the seminary was just hearing so many theoretical notions about ministering without doing any ministering. And I'm to that point now with librarianship. I want to get out and do it. My point is that I would get a hell of a lot more out of a course as narrowly defined as one on serving the blind and physically handicapped once I have a perspective to place it in.

One of the things that I am involved in that has just about driven me to a nervous breakdown is establishing a student chapter of the American Library Association on campus. Why should we have a student chapter above and beyond the individual membership that all students are eligible for? My response is that when you leave library school there is tremendous pressure to focus narrowly and to attend primarily to the job at hand. Especially in your first job there is just so

much learning that has to take place for you to accomplish the job. And once you've overcome that problem, there is a certain tendency to get into a rut. You are out of the mainstream of learning and what you learn is what you need in order to succeed where you are. Excursions into other possibilities are few and far between. My objective is to awaken people to the possibilities of ALA before that happens.

I am looking forward to being in a position where I can start learning about a community and what its needs are even at a fundamental level. I'm really excited about being a spokesperson for the library, going out and interviewing people about what they would like the library to do. I would really love to approach people more formally and do a formal study that doesn't even mention libraries, because often when you ask people what they want the library to do they will mention what books they would like the library to provide. You can't really expect people to know what the library's potential is and yet you can get them to talk about their needs and what they are interested in.

In a hypothetical situation, suppose a group of visually handicapped people approached me around election time and asked if the library had any suggestions about where they could get voter information in a format that they could read. The first thing I would find out about is volunteer organizations—which I hope I would already know about—whose sole purpose is to provide this kind of transition from normal print to print that is acceptable to people who are visually handicapped. I would check to see what kinds of services are available. Just for the sake of argument, let's say that there are no services available. In an ideal situation I would have a databank of the friends' organization for the library and the skills of the people involved would be retrievable. And one of the retrievable skills would be a familiarity with braille or a clear speaking voice and the willingness to record things on tape. I should have access to this information so that I could find library friends who were willing to make a project of providing voter information for the visually handicapped.

I would investigate the Waukesha Vocational Institute, which is very oriented toward the handicapped. I was in the area a year ago when this organization had a whole day devoted to handicapped awareness; students could volunteer to be either wheelchair bound or blindfolded and to spend the entire day in that capacity. It raised both their consciousness and the consciousness of other people who are all of a sudden overwhelmed with a huge number of handicapped people and have the need to be sensitive to them. Knowing these things I think I could count on there being resources and people who would be willing to assist me.

I also would find out how comprehensive the patrons wanted the voter information to be—whether they wanted highlights or all the details, and I would find out how many visually handicapped people were involved. It might be possible to have group sessions and gather all the people together in the library. There are all kinds of possibilities and much depends on the resources that are available. I guess my first step always is to find out what the need is. Then I inventory the resources, and that's where the creative combinations come into play. Sometimes, too, once I have identified the need, I can create the resources. I shy away from the attitude of library service that says, suddenly, "These poor people, we have to help them." It does not work that way. "These poor people" are generally capable of helping themselves. Many community groups are serving as advocates, and one of my primary functions as a librarian will be to show these community groups how the library can really be a synthesizing factor for all areas of concern that community groups are already addressing.

I "burned out" in social work partly because I was working in an institution that had very little awareness and very few resources for dealing with the problems they faced, and partly because I did not have the formal training needed. I have a bachelor's degree in psychology and that prepared me to run rats more than it did anything else. I worked on a day-to-day basis and I had no personal professional goals to energize me. Then I went into the ministry with no clear goal. So it really was only when I came into librarianship that I started developing a world view. I now think of librarianship not only in terms of what I am going to be doing on my first job, but also in terms of where the profession is going and where I fit into that. And I have acquired a realistic awareness that the profession isn't the best in terms of the things that it is currently doing, or how well it is living up to its potential.

One of the areas that I am interested in is marketing. In the commercial sense usually you provide a product or a service and the customer gives you money for it. In libraries the exchange is much more complex, because the money goes through such a circuit before it gets back to you that you cannot really say that you are being paid for providing these services in the normal sense. But you still have to have the exchange process. You still have to be able to show the director, the trustees, the city fathers, everybody involved in the process, what is coming out of this service, and how this service fits into goals and objectives. I think that no matter what kind of library I work in, I would want to have the goals and objectives of the library committed to memory, with the erase function very much intact. In other words,

the goals would not be indelible but would underlie all of my program planning: "How does what I'm doing fit into the function of the library?" I have not seen any figures but I imagine that probably only about 17 percent of libraries have goals and objectives. It's just incredible. Goal setting is a difficult process, but it's almost a question of whether you are going to face a problem, or let the problem face you. If you do not have goals and objectives, you are going to face one screwy mess. If something unexpected comes up, like service to the handicapped, many people have absolutely no idea what to do because they have no criteria to base a decision on. They can't say, "I don't have to worry about that because it's inconsequential to our objectives," or "How did we miss this?" Since they can't decide, the decisions they do make are pretty much off the wall.

Giga Bjorn
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

I am twenty-two years old. The rest of the students here are really so involved in being librarians. It's amazing. When they start talking about real issues in the library world—and they must subscribe to I don't know how many library journals—I find it funny, because I can't take things like that so seriously. The main impression I have of most of the people in my classes is that they are always so serious about everything. It just seems as if they get very involved in things and get upset by them.

At first I thought that they were all really strange, but as I thought about it, it seemed that at every place I've worked there are always people who take everything about their work so seriously that the smallest details will give them fits. Some people like to have set guidelines for everything. Librarians may not have a monopoly on this characteristic.

I know nothing about handicapped people because I've never really worked with them. It seems that all you can do is to make sure they are comfortable. If they come to a story hour, just go along with your stories as you would, and if something happens and they need help, then calm them down and ask them if there is anything that you can do. I suppose there are certain things that it would be better if I knew so I could deal with situations like that. If they came in the room I would just let them come in and when they sat down I would just keep going on. To make their presence a big thing when it is not is not very nice.

Tot Castleton
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

My feeling is that library science gives you a once-over fairly lightly of many things and you do not graduate absolutely trained for anything. It is not the same as working in a library. I think a practical class might include working with special groups and giving reader assistance. To include a number of topics along with sensitivity to the handicapped in the class might make the subject more acceptable to the library school and make it seem more useful to the students.

I think that workshops for librarians or special training for credit would be a good idea, just as teachers take some units or nurses have to take classes in order to keep their licenses. And after you work in a library for a few years you would begin to see who was not being served, and thus the value of these workshops would be more apparent.

Raoul Diaz
Library School Student
San Jose State University

Public libraries are underused. Our service group is very small and usually consists of people who can afford to buy their own books, plus people who read a great deal. Somehow, in answering their needs, which should be answered, we tend to not answer the needs of other people. About 25 percent of the population in the Bay Area is Spanish speaking; libraries that know that at least 10 percent of the population they are serving can read Spanish should have at least one of the Mexico City newspapers. The fact that very few libraries are meeting that need, whether because of political motivation or ignorance, is a failing of the profession.

More libraries are beginning to deal with the "high-low" books—high-interest, low-reading-level books. Cassette tapes would be ideal for people who may not be able to read Joseph Conrad but who can listen to him. Good literature is exciting and reading level has nothing to do with it. Once you get someone excited about it, through reading or listening, there is nothing to stop him from pursuing the interest. Books may be the way to spark this interest or cassettes may be the way to do it. The fact that very few libraries have cassettes means that certain people suffer—poor readers and older people who can no longer read but who love books. The fact that we have very few large-print books is too bad. There are many markets that we are not serving, and that is a shame.

I would not say that the wrong people are coming into the library field, because the people who are coming into it are interested in service. Whether they are giving the right amount of service to the right group could vary with the situation; there may not be enough money, or the librarians may not be aware. It is their business to find out who is out there, but then there is the practical reality that there are only so many hours in a day and they have enough to do.

Cheryl Silverblatt
Library School Student
San Jose State University

Originally I wanted to go into an academic library. I thought it would be nice, with my second master's degree, to go into a little philosophy library somewhere, stay there, and deal with my philosophers. I discovered that there were few jobs in academic libraries. Then I heard a lecture by a woman who worked in a special library, and the things that she said, plus the economics of the situation, made me change my mind. I have not completely given up the idea of an academic library, though.

The first thing I noticed about my peers here is that they are older than I thought they would be; I thought that they were going to say, "Let's go have a beer," and I would have to say, "I can't drink beer, it makes me sick. I have to drink scotch." I had thought that it would be very difficult for me to try to fit in with preppy, young people. I think I have become much more practical and developed broader interests since I came into library school, but I have discovered that many of the people here have not done that. There are people who are flying in the face of all advice and guidance and saying, "No, I want to be a public librarian." There are also a great many practical people here because this school is located near the "Silicon Valley."

I think a few people here would take a course on serving blind and handicapped people, but not an overwhelming number. Last semester we had a deaf person in the program and she was in one of my classes, with her sign-language interpreter. The presence of someone like that makes you aware of very distinctive problems: What is she going to do as a librarian? What does she do as a patron of the library? What does the library offer her and what does the community in general offer her? I also wonder what the academic community offers her in terms of placement, because she had special needs for placement when she graduated. I think that if we were faced with a handicapped person whose needs were made obvious then we would begin to reflect and be more likely to take a course. I think if the problem is not obvious, we

would be less likely to want to learn more about it.

If a blind person came into my special library there would be three things that I would do immediately. To tell you the truth the only organization for the blind that I know about is the Lighthouse for the Blind. I would call them first. The second thing I would do is call my local congressional representative and say, "I need the name of an office that will deal with problems of the handicapped." Then I would have to find out ways to get the patron the specific periodical, or whatever he wanted. But I really think that I would go through a government agency. And that situation of a visually handicapped person using a special library is becoming more and more likely. I think that educational opportunities for handicapped people have increased so much that the likelihood of, let's say, a genetic engineer's being blind is good. I think that there are handicapped people everywhere; there have always been all these handicapped people but in the past they stayed inside. Now they are becoming more visible. I think it is more than likely that I could be standing in any library situation and have someone come in and say, "I need this, but I can't see it."

The thing that I've been discovering is that no one knows what librarians do. Nobody knows what they do! They know what doctors do and what doctors can provide, they know what lawyers do and what lawyers can provide, and they know what museum curators do and what museum curators can provide. But people ask me the most astonishing questions about what I am doing, and that is a result of not really knowing anything about the library.

I myself did not know much about library science before I came to school, and I had never worked in a library. When I first heard about the service orientation of librarians I was really offended. Library science has been so female dominated that the whole notion of being service oriented just seemed like subservience to me. I had always been in libraries, but I never noticed what anybody did in libraries. When I started noticing more and more what people did who worked in libraries, I almost did a complete turnaround. I thought, "They should be more service oriented. What is the matter with them?"

Gail Leslie
Library School Student
San Jose State University

After I had done my undergraduate work in psychology, I got a job setting up the educationally handicapped program for the Gilroy school district. That was the year when the whole concept was to expand programs for the educationally handicapped, before the current trend of mainstreaming. Then I got a job as a waitress and eventually began working with adults who were mentally and physically handicapped doing vocational training. That was a real experience, because now I know all the handicapped people in Gilroy. There was a whole range: some people who were blind, some people who had been in very serious accidents, some who were paralyzed, and some who were brain damaged. I did not get the job on a permanent basis because I did not have a master's degree.

Then I spent two years in community politics, writing and editing political material and basically playing around with information. I also had seen fifty-year-old waitresses and knew that there had to be something else that I could do. I saw an old friend of mine who had become a librarian. We talked about her field and I looked at the library school catalog. I thought, "I could do that. Librarians are not well paid, but they're decently paid. It's a profession that is dominated by women and women understand more about working part time." I figured that I could fit into the alternative structure that existed within the library. Since libraries are open at night and on Saturdays, I would have a flexible schedule.

Until I got a job in a library and started working at the reference desk, it did not occur to me that everything that I have ever done in my whole life matters. Everything that I have ever read in my whole life matters. Anything that you do helps at the reference desk, because it can be helpful in answering questions. That made me feel very good. None of my past life has to be negated; it all counts. I like reference work. I like talking to people and I like fooling around with ideas. There's so much expanding that takes place.

My feeling when I first started taking classes was that there was no one else here like me. I thought I would never make it through; there was much hesitation in class, and no one would volunteer to say anything. People were really not right out there, and even when issues were presented people would not offer their opinions. But I have since found many people who are very approachable, very open. I believe that many people who work in libraries get sucked in and buried by the hierarchical nature of libraries. Even though you start out trying not to, you end up falling into that pattern because the people around you are so consumed by the little details, the little keeping-track-of-things. It drives me crazy. I don't see how I am ever going to fit in. "Just put it in a file and tell me what file you're putting it into. Let's not argue for ten minutes about which file is best. I don't care." What a silly thing, I figure, to apply your head to.

I find that most people in library school have worked in a library somewhere and decided that that was the place for them—for what reason I am not sure. For me the hierarchy is going to be hard; it's just so stringent in libraries. But then, I once had a supervisor in a library who was just like me. She had a hard time dealing with all the people who were above her in the hierarchy who were always criticizing her because she was not extremely well organized and did not really care about all the details. But she had such magic. People in the community loved her. When she worked at the reference desk she created an atmosphere in the library that nobody else could create. She was open; people talked to her, and she was funny. People in the community really loved her and I think that what she did was important. The library was filled with all kinds of art because she made sure that people in the community knew that they could exhibit there. I know there is a range of personalities in the libraries that I've seen, but I still feel a certain rigidity.

Pat Miller
Library School Student
University of California, Berkeley

Do you know where the real problem in serving the handicapped is? I think that there are special sensitivities that may be required in dealing with handicapped people and I like to think that there is training available that might help people become more sensitive. By the same token too many of the librarians working with the public now cannot even deal with the whole, healthy public, let alone someone who has problems. When I look at my colleagues, I think to myself that there are some people in this group who absolutely should not be dealing with the public! And nothing is done about the inter-personal relations that are involved in dealing with the public generally, let alone with people who have particular disabilities. Maybe the whole idea of special sensitivities for the blind and handicapped is just an outgrowth of the fact that we do need more training in dealing with the public.

I am a lifelong library user but it never occurred to me that I would want to work in one. You know, librarians have such dreadful images. Then about seven years ago I worked in our county main library, and I loved it. I got involved in some very exciting things. I realized that I could imagine myself being very challenged and stimulated working in that environment, and in the back of my mind I determined that I wanted to pursue it. I got fired from that job; I believe it was because I was not playing the game but was moving too fast. I think people found me threatening. I became a parent and became involved in some businesses with my husband. For the past ten years I've lived in a very rural environment in Oregon where I was a farmer for a few years. Now, at age forty-one I am one of the older students in library school.

I enjoy learning about how to find information, and when I had my first library job I found it rewarding to be able to help people gain access to information. Although I know that the employment situation is grim right now, I would ideally like to work as a branch librarian. I am eager to go back to my rural community, which is underserved, and help to initiate some kind of library service. Frankly, I would like to be

the librarian for whatever type of service we can organize, and I am finding support for my goal in library school. I am working with the faculty members on an independent study to pursue alternative types of libraries, to find out what else is available, and to find alternative sources of funding. I was expecting that when I came into library school saying, "I want to help start a library in my own little community," some people would say, "That's crazy. That's impossible!" But people have not said that. The school is getting involved in information management concerns—that is probably just an economic fact of life right now. Public library services are not in great demand right now and the school seems to be downplaying public services to some extent. The school has been pushing the computer and information-science tracks, the high-technology things. But several members of the faculty have been helpful and encouraging. There is also a bigger group of public-service-minded people in this year's class than the school anticipated.

Frankly, the student body right now, or a fair segment of it, is up in arms about curriculum; many people are upset about the fact that the school seems to be saying, "You either go this way for public service, or you go that way for information science." Many people are saying, "It's not one or the other. If we're going to serve the public, we obviously need the technology." But the school seems to be making a dichotomy where some public-service-oriented people believe there is none.

If a course were offered about services to the blind and physically handicapped, I think that public-service-oriented people would be interested in it. But the curriculum has been chopped into so many parcels that it is overwhelming, and you cannot really do justice to any of the courses or get involved in them to the depth that you need in any one-year program. There is not enough time or energy to go around. So I do not know, realistically, what the response to any one-year program would be. I think people might be more responsive if they were actually working in the field—for example, if they found they were not doing the best job they could to serve their clientele, or if they had people who were blind or handicapped and they wanted additional training. I think that such a course would be more than a beginning student could really assume in a one-year program.

I believe that blind and handicapped people should be integrated into society. Mail order service is not so good as service that you can actually go into a library and get immediately. There are real problems involved in being served by mail, and I do not think mail service offers the best access. I believe that service should be integrated and that people should be trained for it. I come from a system that has no

access. Our library is physically not designed to admit people in wheelchairs. And if they were somehow to get in, I am not really confident about the service they would get. I think there is a real need for integrated service as opposed to some special service from a facility in the state that does it by mail.

At library school we are always told how selective the university is, but the area of human relations is not considered at all. All library work involves dealing with the public to some extent. So I have found myself wondering if anything more could be done in terms of recruiting for library schools. I do not think that library personnel managers give enough thought to what is required to deal with all kinds of people who come through that door, including people who may have physical limitations that could pose problems. And one reason is that people with limitations generally do not come through the library door. I want to get out and work in the field as soon as possible, and yet I would like to have the opportunity to come back for additional training in various areas. I have no idea how many librarians are returning to school to get a course in this or that.

One of the things that I am preparing to do is to help organize my community to see if we can get a citizen's group together to investigate library service possibilities. I want to conduct a citizen's survey of the entire community to explore the needs our community has and ultimately come up with ideas for the kind of library service we would like to have. Part of my job then will be to make people aware of the varieties of service available. Too often "library" just means checking out books. That's what it amounts to, and I think that I need to educate people about what a library can do. I will be doing this as a member of the community who cannot get a job working for the county. I have talked with a few people who have expressed interest in the idea, so we might have a core of people who would be interested enough to work on it. None of this, of course, pays any money. My husband and I have a couple of Mexican delicatessens, so on the side I guess I may be making burritos.

I have really deep feelings about the kinds of contributions and changes that a library can make in the lives of people. I think it is because I believe the library has made some significant changes in my life that I am excited about the possibilities.

Conclusion

Some of the conclusions to be drawn from the interviews presented are very simple. Print-handicapped people do not know much about libraries. Library school students do not know much about print-handicapped people and are not being taught to serve them in most library schools. None of the librarians currently serving the blind and physically handicapped was taught about this client group in library school. There are varying levels of service and funding offered to the blind and physically handicapped, but basically the professionals running these services are a committed, understanding, and energetic group of people who are currently working double-time to keep their patrons supplied with books. The NLS network is doing its job in providing recorded and brailled books, plus playback equipment and back-up expertise, to its awesome network. The NLS system is not household knowledge in library schools. Librarians, students, and patrons should get together and talk about the issues they all have raised.

Education is a large problem here. It involves the general public, the library school instructors, the library school students, librarians currently serving the blind and physically handicapped, librarians not serving the blind and physically handicapped, public library administrators, and decision makers at all levels of government. At present the burden for educating all of these groups, including themselves, falls on the librarians serving the blind and physically handicapped, who have enough to do just keeping their services running. Education concerning the capabilities and desires of the handicapped will occur outside of the library environment if the educational and vocational opportunities for the handicapped continue to move them more into society. They will then educate by example. That is a very slow process, though, and it depends to some extent on handicapped people's having access to the information that the rest of the world uses to move ahead. Librarians have a job to do in reeducating themselves and in educating coming generations of librarians. And once that large order is filled,

they can begin educating the handicapped on the uses of a library.

NLS network librarians have acquired their skills on the job, including varying degrees of management know-how that are spoken of here so often. Perhaps this management aspect should be stressed more in library school programs; at the same time, however, if libraries for the blind and handicapped had the status they deserve, they would automatically be run by librarian managers who have made their way up the ladders in their respective library situations, learning and managing as they went.

If basic library training included mention of the blind and handicapped and urged attention to this patron group, new professionals, thus enlightened, would begin to assume some of their responsibilities toward meeting the needs of this group, in whatever library at which they arrive. New library administrators, thus enlightened, would place the proper emphasis on this service in their respective libraries. NLS librarians would not have to labor under the continued threat of cuts and closures, and they would be able to take the time to think and plan while their staff made sure that books were sent out to people. Subregional libraries might certainly expand under these conditions. Staff, along with public librarians, might be able to get out in the community more, and might use their imaginations more to develop ways of including the handicapped in the normal flow of local library use. And the blind and handicapped patrons, with a little encouragement, some imagination, and more commitment than money on the part of all librarians, could be benefiting from a fuller library service than they now receive.

It does not take an overwhelming program of sensitivity or medical training for librarians to be able to work with the handicapped. These people are not so special. A motivated, people-oriented person who goes through training to become a librarian should easily be able to serve handicapped patrons well. All the task takes is a little added knowledge. A librarian who is concerned about promoting the library in the community and educating the community about the library, as well as discovering community needs, will of necessity encounter the handicapped and with a little extra nudge realize that they are to be included in library services.

The situation as stated in these interviews will continue to exist unless there is some drastic change in the status of the handicapped or in library education programs. But a few of us can educate by example and not wait for someone else to make the next move.

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The Library of Congress

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